Why Mr. Bertrand Russell is not a Christian.

An Essay in Controversy

by H. G. Wood, M.A.

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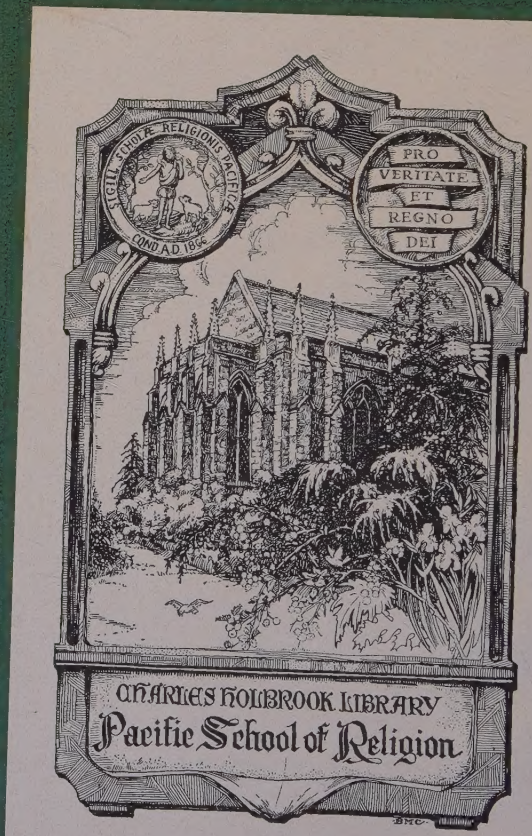
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Why Mr Bertrand Russell is not a Christian

An Essay in Controversy

BY

H. G. WOOD, M.A.

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MAGISTRO MEO ET AMICO

PREFACE

I HAVE written this book because I could not help myself. The Hon. Bertrand Russell is a provocative writer, and his tract, *Why I am not a Christian*, so stimulated me that I had to write about it. In this tract Mr Russell appears to be trailing his coat, and it seems a pity that he should miss a fight if he wants one. I am well aware that I am "impar congressu Achilli," but when Achilles deliberately protrudes an obviously vulnerable heel, the most modest Trojan may be excused for discharging a shaft or two.

I find that Mr Russell rouses in me the debater and the dialectician, and that both intentionally and unintentionally he appeals to my sense of humour. This is always dangerous, as it is easy to overpress one's arguments and waste time on mere debating points while, as a demure young mid-Victorian friend wrote in her diary, "fun may pass beyond the bounds which can be justified in the quiet tribunal of conscience."

If in any point I have been unfair in argument, or have failed to keep within the limits of good taste in irony, I ask the forgiveness both of Mr Russell and my readers. I have hit hard because Achilles is well able to defend himself, and because I think he deserves vigorous criticism and would

prefer it. If I wound, I would ask him to believe that I have sought to wound without malice and with some approximation to the fidelity of a friend. I even entertain the hope that if he reads this book, he may find in reading it some of the enjoyment I have found in writing it.

At any rate, I felt I had to write it in the interests of truth. I would fain persuade Mr Russell himself to think again on issues on which he has made up his mind too lightly. And if I cannot reach Mr Russell, I hope I may persuade his admirers to recognize the inconsistencies, the prejudices, and the superficialities which unfortunately tarnish the reputation as they warp the judgment of one who is admittedly in the front rank of present-day thinkers.

As this book is concerned with the adequacy or inadequacy of Mr Russell's reasons for not being a Christian, I have not confined my attention to the tract which first prompted me to write. I have taken into consideration some relevant portions of his little book *What I Believe*—a writing which may be classed with *Why I am not a Christian* in that it is equally popular, equally brilliant, and equally disappointing. I have also dealt with his general position in psychology and philosophy as set forth in his recent admirable book, *An Outline of Philosophy*, in order to discover how far his more serious philosophic theories support his rationalist prejudices, and how far these philosophic theories are themselves tenable. The first six chapters are concerned in the main with the topics dealt with

in the tract *Why I am not a Christian.* The latter half of the book goes further afield, and brings other writings of Mr Russell under review.

I cannot end this preface without expressing my thanks to two or three friends who have read the manuscript in whole or in part. I am particularly indebted to my colleague, the Rev. W. Fearon Halliday, who has made many suggestions, and who is responsible for the note on p. 62. The friends concerned are not otherwise responsible for any of the judgments contained in this book. They are only responsible for saving it from being worse than it is.

H. G. WOOD.

WOODBROOKE,
21*st January* 1928.

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CHAPTER I

Introductory

Some justification may be needed for devoting a book, or a considerable portion of a book, to the refutation of a slender pamphlet. The attack must indeed be formidable if it calls forth a defence so elaborate. The text ought to be of great intrinsic worth to justify so extended a commentary. Yet the character of the pamphlet in question hardly sustains this plea. Mr Bertrand Russell himself will not claim for his tract, *Why I am not a Christian*, that it is more than a trifle thrown off in the midst of more serious intellectual labours. He does not expect it to add to his reputation, and his admirers will doubt whether such a treatment of a great theme was worthy either of the theme or of the writer. Christianity has certainly survived more formidable attacks, and is not likely to succumb to this little sally of Mr Russell's. The pamphlet is, of course, written with the clarity and vigour we have learned to expect from Mr Russell. It is enlivened by that vein of ironic humour which this distinguished philosopher works to such delightful purpose. The address is well adapted to confirm the faith of the secularist stalwarts to whom it was delivered. It

does indeed contain traces of scientific modernism, as, for example, in the references to new ideas of cause and effect, or of natural law; and if these had been developed it would have been very disturbing to secularist orthodoxy; but like a skilful popular preacher, Mr Bertrand Russell skates over the thin ice and keeps on the well-worn and familiar ground which the secularist loves, to wit, the fallacies of Theists and the crimes of the Church. His audience must have purred with delight to hear their old shibboleths re-stated so brilliantly. The pamphlet is also well-adapted to stimulate eager minds which are beginning to inquire and doubt in the realm of religion. To such it may prove suggestive and may even seem, at first reading, to be forcible. But it is doubtful whether such a first impression will survive in the mind of anyone who is seriously concerned with the issues of truth and falsehood in religion. The pamphlet summarises a phase of inquiry through which many educated people pass, but in which few educated people rest. To those who know the trend of present-day thought about religion, *Why I am not a Christian* will seem already remote and antiquated. It represents the way clever undergraduates in Cambridge discussed what they supposed were fundamental issues in religion, when Mr Bertrand Russell went up in the nineties. To read it now is to listen to an echo of a dead past. All the most important issues in the realm of religion are either ignored or accorded a strictly conventional treatment. The tract *Why I am*

not a Christian might have been written by a man who knows nothing or next to nothing of the present position of historical inquiry into the origin and development of Christianity. It might have been written by a man who knows nothing or next to nothing of the comparative study of religion. It might have been written by a man who knows nothing or next to nothing of the best or most stimulating recent work in the psychology or philosophy of religion. Mr Russell has nothing new to say about either proofs of the existence of God or the character of Christ or the moral failures of the Church, and every point that he makes has long ago been weighed and discounted by all who are seriously seeking to discover what is living and what is dead in the Christian tradition. From beginning to end there is not a suggestion of an idea in this pamphlet that is of the least use to the genuinely modern mind.

If the content of the pamphlet, in spite of Mr Russell's freshness of presentation, offers no fresh contribution to the discussion of religion, why write a book about it ? For two reasons it seems worth while to subject the pamphlet to critical analysis. In the first place, it is not enough to assert this rather disparaging estimate of its significance ; an attempt must be made to substantiate the assertion. One main thesis of this book is that Mr Bertrand Russell is not a Christian for the same reason that the present writer is not a mathematician. He knows very little about the subject, and has never given it his serious attention.

But if this is true, a more significant issue emerges. Why did Mr Bertrand Russell think the pamphlet worth publishing ? Why does he over-value it, as he manifestly does ? Two reasons may be suggested. To begin with, he is the victim of a bad tradition. The serious discussion of religion is still hampered by the supposition that anyone with an established reputation in some field of natural science is entitled to a respectful hearing whenever he cares to give his views on religion. Theology, having once been acclaimed as the queen of sciences, is now regarded as a kind of Aunt Sally. It used to be the crowning edifice in the city of science, but it is now too often treated as a tip, where any rubbish may be shot. However it comes about, undoubtedly writers like Ernst Hæckel and Mr Bertrand Russell suffer their reputation as scientists to be exploited in the interests of ignorance and prejudice on the subject of religion. Mr Russell, when he writes on relativity, writes as an expert ; but when he turns to religion, he writes like an amateur—an uncritical and irresponsible amateur who condemns without discrimination the half-truths he happens to dislike and commends without qualification the half-truths he happens to prefer. Curiously enough, many scientific men continue to imagine that it is scientific to drop the scientific spirit and let their prejudices have free play when they take up the problems of religion. If a theologian were to write about relativity with the slender equipment which Mr Bertrand Russell regards as

sufficient qualification for dogmatizing about religion, he would be laughed to scorn. It is indeed very undesirable that the sciences which deal with religion should be confined to specialists. The incursions of brilliant thinkers from other fields of research should always be welcome, but those who are giving their lives to the scientific study of religion have the right to demand that those who come over on occasion into their special field should retain the true scientific spirit even if they cannot find time to make themselves acquainted with the best and most recent works on the subject. Theologians, however, have sinned so badly in the past in maintaining outworn prejudice in the realm of natural science, that perhaps they must not complain if biologists like Hæckel or mathematical physicists like Mr Bertrand Russell return the compliment. Nevertheless, this failure of a scientific conscience in scientific men is very lamentable, and since *Why I am not a Christian* is a conspicuous example of a fault too frequently committed, it seems worth while to expose it, and expose it at length.

It is strange that Mr Bertrand Russell, who is usually so critical of traditions, should fall into line so contentedly with traditional Rationalist propaganda. May it be that he does not realize the superficial and unscientific character of this form of propaganda because he himself has little or no feeling for religion? What John Morley wrote of Voltaire would seem to be true of Mr Bertrand Russell: "It is necessary to admit," says Morley,

"from the point of view of impartial criticism, that Voltaire had one defect of character of extreme importance in a leader of this memorable and direct attack. With all his enthusiasm for things noble and lofty, generous and compassionate, he missed the peculiar emotion of holiness, the soul and life alike of the words of Christ and Saint Paul, that indefinable secret of the long hold of mystic superstition over so many high natures, otherwise entirely prepared for the brightness of the rational day. From this impalpable essence which magically surrounds us with the mysticism and subtle atmosphere of the unseen, changing distances and proportions, adding new faculties of sight and purpose, extinguishing the flames of disorderly passion in a flood of truly divine aspiration, we have to confess that the virtue went out in the presence of Voltaire. . . . Through the affronts which his reason received from certain pretensions both in the writers and in some of those whose actions they commemorated, this sublime trait in the Bible, in both portions of it, was unhappily lost to Voltaire. He had no ear for the finer vibrations of the spiritual voice." [1]

We must not stay to ask how it was that Morley, who had an ear for the finer vibrations of the spiritual voice, and who attributed so much of good in human life to the emotion of holiness, could consider that he was walking in the brightness of a rational day when he dismissed it all as mystic superstition. At least, Morley's scepticism was

[1] *Voltaire*, pp. 241, 242 (Eversley edition.)

the scepticism of a man who had some feeling for religion. With Mr Bertrand Russell the case is different. He is more like Voltaire, as the next chapter will endeavour to show. Hence it comes that he rejects Christianity without understanding either the real strength or the more serious difficulties of the Christian position.

CHAPTER II

What is Religion?

WHAT is a Christian? We need not quarrel seriously with Mr Bertrand Russell's answer to this question. He assumes that to be a Christian involves a belief in God and immortality, and an estimate of Jesus Christ as the best and wisest of men. It might, however, be suggested, and ought indeed to be remembered, that the philosophic doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul is not essentially a Christian position, though probably most Christians accept it. It does not belong to the Judaism from which Christianity took its rise, and it is not certain that Jesus or St Paul adopted it. It would be more accurate to say that a Christian believes in God, entertains the hope of immortality, and regards Jesus Christ as the best and wisest of men. I am, however, prepared to discuss the reasons which lead Mr Bertrand Russell to deny the immortality of the soul as well as his grounds for denying the existence of God. But since limitations of time did not permit him to deal with the doctrine of immortality in *Why I am not a Christian*, I shall take up the arguments contained in *What I Believe*, and postpone the discussion of them until the end

of this book. As, moreover, the arguments for theism which Mr Russell so brilliantly demolishes in the first two-thirds of his address are, on his own showing, not the real reasons why men believe, I propose to examine first his account of those real reasons, together with the subjects which occupy the last twelve pages of his tract, before turning to the more metaphysical arguments.

Mr Bertrand Russell offers two main psychological reasons for the hold of religion on men's minds: "What really moves people to believe in God is not any intellectual argument at all. Most people believe in God because they have been taught from early infancy to do it, and that is the main reason. Then I think that the next most powerful reason is the wish for safety, a sort of feeling that there is a big brother who will look after you. That plays a very profound part in influencing people's desire for a belief in God." [1]

Beyond doubt, these psychological factors do really predispose men to accept certain religious beliefs. In a similar manner, Mr Bertrand Russell is psychologically predisposed to accept any theory, however bizarre, so long as it shocks common sense. The writer of a review in *The Times Literary Supplement* of Mr Russell's latest book, *An Outline of Philosophy*, expressed his surprise that so brilliant a thinker spent so much time on a theory like Behaviourism, and was still further astonished that Mr Russell, when at length he criticized the theory as inadequate, seemed to

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, pp. 19, 20.

abandon it with regret. The fact is that Mr Russell desires to believe Behaviourism, because, as Mr C. D. Broad observes of his leaning towards another theory, "it would shock more intensely more of the people whom he likes to shock."[1] Now just as we may not dismiss Mr Bertrand Russell's views because what really moves him to reject traditional beliefs is a violent reaction against all that he was taught in early infancy, and because a desire to shock the bourgeois mind plays a very profound part in influencing his intellectual attitudes, so it is impossible to dismiss religious beliefs as ill-founded or untrue because their hold on men's minds depends in part at least on docility, on early associations, and on the wish for safety. If Mr Russell imagines that the presence of such psychological factors decides the case against religion he is mistaken.

Moreover, while these factors count in religion (as they count incidentally elsewhere—in politics, in economics, and even in science and philosophy), they are not the only or the chief factors in the maintenance of religion. Even if it were true that a majority of believers believed only in virtue of these psychological factors, religion retains its hold primarily because men find something in their experience which rightly or wrongly seems to them to confirm what they have been taught or what they desire to believe. Nor are believers as uncritical as Mr Russell would like us to suppose. It is a myth sedulously fostered by Rationalists, that

[1] *Mind and its Place in Nature*, p. 650.

criticism is at its best among unbelievers. That is not my experience. I find more searching doubt and more serious criticism in honest faith than I do among the champions of Rationalist negations. The home of naïve uncritical dogmatism to-day is the Secularist Society. Christianity survives at any rate because a number of men continue genuinely to believe it, not because they infer God from a philosophic argument but because they think they have found God in their experience.

It is clear that these psychological reasons which show why men are predisposed to accept religious beliefs are not the only reasons why men believe, and do not in any case determine the truth or falsity of those beliefs. It is, furthermore, clear that they do not explain the origin of those beliefs. They help to show *why* men believe. They do not account for *what* they believe. At least this must be admitted with regard to the first of Mr Russell's reasons. You may believe what you are told in infancy because you were told it in infancy. But this gives us no information about the content of your belief. It explains neither its nature nor its origin nor its worth. The case is perhaps different with the second psychological reason for the hold of religion on men's minds. If you want to feel safe, you might imagine a big brother to believe in. At any rate Mr Bertrand Russell does include the wish for safety in the meagre account which he gives of the foundation or roots of religion. "Religion is based, I think, primarily and mainly upon fear. It is partly the terror of the unknown and partly,

as I have said, the wish to feel that you have a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes. Fear is the basis of the whole thing—fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death."[1] Mr Russell offers one further suggestion. "The whole conception of God is a conception derived from the ancient Oriental despotisms."[2] This last suggestion is not very illuminating. That men's conceptions of God may at times have been coloured by conceptions derived from ancient Oriental despotisms is true, but that the whole conception of God derives from such a source is impossible. It would be easier to reverse the proposition and trace conceptions of Oriental despotism back to conceptions of God. For conceptions of God existed before Oriental despotisms were thought of and among peoples who have never bowed to such despotisms. Plato's conception of God and Aristotle's have no connection with ancient Oriental despotisms. The great prophets of Israel were not impressed by Oriental despots, and their conviction of God's absolute sovereignty derives from quite another source. The Christian conception of God likewise cannot be explained by any such derivation. No modern scientific work on religion, whether by believer or Rationalist, would endorse Mr Russell's sweeping assertion. Nor is the theory that the basis of the whole thing is fear in much happier plight. It is a very old theory, and its inadequacy has long ago been recognized. It

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 29. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

is summed up in a Latin tag, "Timor fecit deos," and if Mr Russell had remembered this he might have been a little more sceptical, for he tells in his *Outline of Philosophy* that: "If there is one thing more than another that the experience of a long life has taught me, it is that Latin tags always express falsehoods."[1]

This particular Latin tag, which sums up Mr Russell's theory of religion, is doubly false. It is false because fear is not the only source of religion, and it is false because the term "fear" is used in a slovenly way to cover many different emotions, from the slavish fear unworthy of a free man to the awe and reverence in the presence of the truly sacred, without which the free man is not properly or fully a man.

To illustrate the variety of the influences which have fostered religion and formed religious conceptions, it is sufficient to cite Cicero's summary of the teaching of Cleanthes the Stoic on this subject: "Our Cleanthes said that the conception of gods had been formed in the souls of men from four causes. The first cause was to be found in the clairvoyance which reveals things future: the second cause was a consideration of the greatness of the benefits we receive from the temperature of the sky, the fertility of the earth, and the many other boons of Nature: the third, the awe instilled into the minds of men by lightning, tempests, thunderclouds, snowstorms, hail, devastations, pestilence, shakings and rumblings of

[1] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 107.

the earth, showers of stones, bloody rain, landslides and sudden gapings of the ground, unnatural monstrosities in men and animals, fiery lights, comets, etc. . . . Such phenomena have terrified men and led them to believe in the existence of some heavenly divine power. The fourth cause, and the most important of all, was their observing the regularity of the movements and revolutions of the heavens, of the sun and the moon, the difference, variety, beauty, order of all the stars. It was enough to look at these things to have proof that they could not come by mere chance." [1]

Modern students of religion would not be satisfied with the theories of Cleanthes, but they would find them a good deal more scientific than the crude hypothesis adopted by Mr Bertrand Russell, who has not yet come within sight of Cleanthes.[2] The old Stoic has the advantage of Mr Russell in many ways. Incidentally, in explaining the conception of God or gods, he does not think it worth while to mention ancient Oriental despotisms—a sensible omission. More important than that is his recognition of the fact that fear is only one cause among others. There is, of course,

[1] I take this translation of Cic. de Nat. Deorum iii. 16 from *Later Greek Religion*, ed. Edwyn Bevan, pp. 11, 12.

[2] Mr. Russell might reply that he has already dealt with the second and fourth points of Cleanthes in his discussion of the arguments from natural law and design. Such a contention, however, reinforces my present criticism. Mr Russell apparently does not realize that behind the formal arguments lie elements of religious emotion as fundamental as the so-called basis of fear. Consequently he has a totally inadequate conception of the psychological basis of religion on the one hand, and of the real force behind the formal intellectual arguments on the other.

no doubt that his third cause is very important and very primitive. It seems that Jahweh, the god of Israel, was originally a storm-god. At least he is associated with the thunder and the tempest from very early days, and even the prophets draw on this association for much impressive symbolism. But if Jahweh had been only or chiefly or fundamentally a storm-god, the Jews would never have become a nation, and the Jewish religion would have had no history. To call this element of fear the foundation of religion is sheer nonsense, even if it should turn out to be the most primitive element in religion. Cleanthes is perfectly justified in insisting on the part played by his other three factors. His insistence on the fourth cause and its importance is noteworthy. There is no doubt that not only the unsophisticated observation of the heavens, but also the science of astronomy, in its beginnings and since, has helped to build up religion. The history of the relations of religion and science is not a history of perpetual conflict. But even all the factors mentioned by Cleanthes, taken together, do not explain the higher developments of religion. They do not explain the religion of the prophets or the essentials of Christian experience. A French writer on Pascal, referring to the more creative periods in the history of the Christian Church, says very truly: "At these epochs the religious sentiment possesses a rather individual and altogether distinct character. It is not the feeling of primitive peoples before terrifying phenomena, it is not the tender emotion

of sensitive souls in presence of the beneficence which flows from Nature, nor yet the wonder of the philosopher contemplating the order of the world: nor again the delight of the artist confronting the glory of created things: it is the falling back of man on the inner recesses of his self: it is the discovery of the Christian consciousness." The writer goes on to describe the inner moral conflict in which time and again great men and humble men have found God. But we need not at the moment pursue this topic further, since the position of Cleanthes is sufficient to show that Mr Bertrand Russell's theory does not account for primitive religion. Still less does it account for the essentials of the Christian religion.

Mr Bertrand Russell's use of the term "fear" does, however, require further comment. The fear which plays such an important part in primitive religion is itself a complex of emotions. It was often the sheer abject terror which Mr Russell denounces as slavish, but it also included the beginnings of awe and reverence, the emotions appropriate to the recognition of the sublime in Nature. Because these very different emotions are confused in primitive religion, Mr Bertrand Russell is apparently unable to distinguish them in thought. I suppose he must have the same difficulty in distinguishing courtesy from servility. Slavish fear is cringing before mere power, natural or human. Reverence is the sense of the sacred whether we meet it in man or in Nature. The great antidote to slavish fear is reverence for the

truly sacred. In the fear of primitive religion, the wheat and the tares are growing side by side. Mr Russell sees only tares, and in his anxiety to root them up is unaware that he is pulling up the wheat also.

Mr Bertrand Russell's constant denunciations of the fear of God as something slavish remind one very forcibly of the bar-parlour orator described by Dickens in *Sketches by Boz*:

"Improving company!" said Mr Rogers, for that it seemed was the name of the red-faced man. "You may say I am improving company, for I've improved you all to some purpose; though as to my conversation being as my friend Mr Ellis here describes it, that is not for me to say anything about. You, gentlemen, are the best judges on that point: but this I will say, when I came into this parish and first used this room, ten years ago, I don't believe there was one man in it who knew he was a slave—and now you all know it and writhe under it. Inscribe that upon my tomb and I am satisfied."

In the same way, before the Hon. Bertrand Russell came along to enlighten them, quite a number of simple believers were unaware that they were slaves. And even now some of us are unconvinced, and are inclined to reply to Mr Bertrand Russell as the chubby-faced greengrocer replied to the red-faced man: "When you come to talk about slaves and that there abuse, you'd better keep it in the family, 'cos I for one don't

like to be called them names, night after night." And when Mr Bertrand Russell, like the parlour-orator reiterates, "But you are a slave; and the most pitiable of all slaves—a willing slave," we shall murmur with the greengrocer, "Prove it."

One further point is worth attention. Mr Bertrand Russell assumes that the fear of the mysterious and the fear of the unknown are one and the same thing. But the mysterious and the unknown cannot be identified in this simple fashion. What we know may be mysterious, may fill us with awe and wonder, as well as the unknown. Familiarity breeds contempt, but only in dull unimaginative or overworked and overtired spirits—perhaps also in impatient superficial hunters of novelties. A hero is not a hero to his valet, but as Hegel pointed out long ago, this is not because the hero is not a hero, but because the valet is a valet.[1] To the poet and the mystic, to the truly religious man it is not the unknown but the known that seems mysterious, and in such men the familiar awakes feelings of childlike wonder and grateful reverence. Indeed, religious men love rather than fear mystery, and perhaps more superstition is due to the love of mystery than to the fear of it.

Mr Bertrand Russell believes that it is the purpose of science to dispel mystery. If so, it is singularly unsuccessful, for the world, as revealed

[1] In *The Outline of Philosophy*, p. 265, Mr Russell reminds us that, "It is not from the logician that awe before truth is to be expected." This helps to explain why the mere logician is a mutilated human being.

by Einstein, seems more wonderful than the world interpreted by Newton, and the world as Newton conceived it was more wonderful than the world of Ptolemæus. The function of science is not to rid the world of mystery, but to replace false mysteries by true ones, or perhaps shallow mysteries by profound ones. If religion is deeply concerned with the mystery that attaches to the universe and our life in it, science will never destroy it, but should constantly purify it.

There remains the suggestion that combined with terror of the unknown is the wish to feel that you have a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes. The combination is not an easy one though it is possible. For an elder brother can be at one and the same time a bit of a terror and a present help in time of trouble. But possibly Mr Bertrand Russell regards these two factors—fear of the unknown and wish to find an elder brother—not as uniting, but as leading to divergent religious beliefs. These divergent religious tendencies may be found in Hinduism, embodied in Siva and Vishnu, the former the god of terror, the latter the elder brother. But while no doubt the fear of the destructive side of Nature creates Siva, it is not so clear that Vishnu is the projection of a desire to find an elder brother. He is rather a reflection of the actual beneficence of Nature. In any case, we talk too readily of religious beliefs as wish-fulfilments. The situation is not so simple as that. One illustration may suffice. There was

in the Roman Empire a desire more or less conscious for a world-wide religion. That desire predisposed men to be interested in Christianity and other competing Oriental cults. But the desire did not and could not create the religion in which it found satisfaction. The religion the desire created was the worship of the Emperor, and that religion could not satisfy the desire that gave it birth. We may narrow it still further. We sometimes speak, and with reason, of Jesus as the desire of all the nations, and good scholars—Miss J. E. Harrison for example, if I am not mistaken—toy with the idea that the figure in the Gospels was the projection of this desire of all the nations. But you have only to read the works of the Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson to see that Jesus Christ cannot be explained as a mythical creation, and psychologically it is clear that the power of Jesus to clarify and satisfy the desires of men's hearts depends on His historicity, on the fact that He is "no fable old nor mythic lore, nor dream of bards and seers."

To sum up, it is apparent that the Hon. Bertrand Russell does not know and does not care to know what religion means to those who believe in it, and that he does not even seem to be acquainted with the present position of the comparative study of religion. The main reason why he is not a Christian is that he simply does not know what religion is.

Note

The contrast between Julian Huxley and Bertrand Russell in the interpretation of religion is very illuminating. In trying to explain the nature of religion, Julian Huxley quotes with approval his distinguished ancestor: "T. H. Huxley, after speaking of 'the engagement of the affections in favour of that particular kind of conduct which we call good,' continues, 'I cannot but think that it, together *with the awe and reverence which have no kinship with base fear but arise whenever one tries to pierce below the surface of things*, whether they be material or spiritual, constitutes all that has any unchangeable reality in religion.'" [1] Contrast this discriminating if inadequate account of the essence of religion with Mr Russell's trite and trivial assertion, Fear is the basis of the whole thing!

Take again a sentence or two from Julian Huxley on the sense of mystery. "Another characteristic of the sense of mystery in the disciplined mind is that it tends to find its *objects more and more in the familiar, less in the merely unusual.* This, too, has its parallel in art. . . . The great artist can make a kitchen table contain more beauty and meaning than a second-rate hand can infuse into a picture of the greatest event in history: and the finest works of art deal often with the simplest and most familiar human verities. So with religion." [2]

[1] *Religion without Revelation*, pp. 151, 152. Italics mine.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 162.

Contrast with this insight the blindness of Mr Russell's identification of the mysterious with the unknown, or the temperamental bias revealed in such a sentence as this from *What I Believe* (p. 10): "Physical science is thus approaching the stage when it will be complete and *therefore uninteresting*" (italics mine). Mr Russell is an intellectual Alexander the Great. If science should come into its kingdom in his lifetime, he would be unable to do anything but weep that there were no more worlds to conquer. He wants the truth, but he warns us beforehand that he won't be happy when he gets it.

CHAPTER III

Does Religion make Men Good?

If Mr Bertrand Russell does not know what religion is, it is not very likely that he will understand the actual relations between religion and morals. Even so, it is startling to find him committing himself to the following curious sentences: "One is often told that it is a very wrong thing to attack religion, because religion makes men virtuous. So I am told; I have not noticed it."[1] When I read those two sentences, I began to think there must be more in the Behaviourist theory of thought-processes than I had realized. Professor J. B. Watson, the Behaviourist, whom Mr Russell apparently regards as a more profound philosopher than Kant, replaces thought-processes by what he calls the Language-habit.[2] When Mr Russell uttered these sentences, I cannot believe he was thinking. He must have been the victim of the Language-habit, or even worse of the talking habit. If, however, we must take it as fact that never once in the course of a long life has Mr Bertrand Russell noticed a man or a woman who was the better for believing in God

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 26.
[2] Cf. *Analysis of Mind*, p. 27.

and immortality, we can only conclude that his experience, however extended in time, must be so restricted in scope as to be a very inadequate equipment for a philosopher. But perhaps Mr Russell is really in the position of Sam Weller, who, when asked whether he saw his father in court, fixed his eyes steadily on the ceiling and said that he did not observe him at present. No doubt when Mr Russell has the time and inclination to turn his attention seriously to the subject of the bearing of religious beliefs on moral courage and achievement, he will be able to make a few personal observations and not be in the humiliating position of having to depend on hearsay. In the meantime any Rationalist historian, given due notice, should be able to discover for Mr Bertrand Russell five or six characters in history whose greatness and goodness are manifestly inseparable from their religious faith—Socrates, for example, or Abraham Lincoln or John Woolman. Would Socrates have been as good and as great a man if he had not believed in his *dæmonion* and obeyed it? Would Abraham Lincoln have been as great and as good a man if he had been incapable of penning his second inaugural? Would John Woolman ever have carried the crusade against slavery so far if he had not believed in God's guidance? If Mr Russell wants more recent examples, he might try visiting any live Salvation Army citadel.

But probably Mr Russell did not intend to convey anything quite so preposterous as the

assertion that faith in God and immortality has never helped any individual to live a good life. Perhaps all he wanted to assert was that goodness is not really dependent on these beliefs. This at least would make his quotation from *Erewhon* (pp. 26, 27) relevant. For as his argument stands, there is a *non sequitur*. He is arguing that religion does not make men good, and his proof rests on the absurdity of supposing that men would cease to be virtuous if they ceased to believe the "myth" of the Ascension. But if we grant the absurdity of this supposition—and the absurdity is even more apparent in Mr Guy Thorne's serious presentation of it in *When it was Dark* than in Samuel Butler's satirical parody of it in *Erewhon Revisited*—yet the fact that morals would not be undermined by the surrender of a particular belief such as belief in the ascension of a given religious teacher, does not prove (*a*) that religion does not make men good, or (*b*) that this particular belief itself did not help to make men good. You might just as well argue that exercise does not make men warm because they can keep warm by a fire without it. Moreover, it does not follow that there is no essential connection between more fundamental religious beliefs and morality because morality need not be seriously affected and probably would not be seriously affected by the surrender of some detail of a religious creed. Rationalists take short views on this subject. The good atheist, such as the hero of Edna Lyall's *Donovan*, is appealed to as proof that creed is an

unimportant factor in the formation of character or the guidance of conduct. For the short period and for the individual it is often true that the disavowal of some fundamental truth of religion does not bring disaster. In the long run the dissociation of morals from religion does not appear to be so simple or so successful. Nor is the atheist free from the help of the religion he denies. T. S. Eliot reviewed Mr Bertrand Russell's tract in the *Monthly Criterion* under the title of "Why Mr Bertrand Russell is a Christian." He was perfectly justified, for Mr Russell's moral ideal would not be what it is if he had been an atheist in a non-Christian land. Mr Russell's ethics are still coloured, deeply and indelibly coloured, by religion, the despised Christian religion.

When it is suggested that the whole of morality would crumble if the Ascension or Resurrection of Christ were to be denied, the suggestion is palpably absurd. Some sort of morality would survive, if the figure of Jesus could be shown to be mythical. At the same time, the decision of the man Higgs to go away quietly and not disturb the morals of *Erewhon* by denying his ascension had more sense in it than Butler meant to admit. As a matter of experience, moral systems may be so closely associated with imperfect or false beliefs, that the hasty disturbance of these beliefs does more harm than good. And very imperfect moral and religious systems need to be handled with a measure of sympathy and caution. Robert Louis Stevenson once wrote to a lady-missionary on this

subject. He said: "Forget wholly and for ever all small pruderies and remember that you cannot change ancestral feelings of right and wrong without what is practically soul-murder. Barbarous as they may seem, always hear them with patience, always judge them with gentleness, always find in them some seed of good: see that you always develop them: remember that all you can do is to civilize the man in the line of his own civilization, such as it is." This risk of soul-murder has often been urged as an objection to the Christian missionary enterprise. Though Stevenson himself repudiated any such short-sighted deduction, it may more legitimately be urged against unwise and crude methods of propaganda. Mr Bertrand Russell's own missionary campaign in China, with his sweeping depreciation of traditions, has definitely tended to demoralize the Chinese and made the path of national progress much harder for them.

Returning once more to this claim that religion makes men virtuous, we may perhaps suppose that Mr Russell does mean to deny this proposition though his argument from *Erewhon* is quite beside the point, but his denial is meant to refer to the influence of religion on the whole. He would not deny the innumerable instances of individuals who have been strengthened morally by their religious beliefs, but he would urge that in general religion has done more harm than good and so has not on balance made men virtuous. This is at least a tenable position and worth discussing. Perhaps Mr Russell might even say that all my banter

about individual instances of good men who have been religious is beside the point, because what he is often told is that "It is very wrong to attack religion, because religion [always] makes men virtuous." I should really be surprised if Mr Russell often hears anything so foolish and if he thinks such a silly claim for religion worth refuting. Thoughtful Christians would never dream of asserting either that it is very wrong to criticize religion or that religion always makes men virtuous. So far from it being wrong to criticize religion, the great religious teachers have done very little else but criticize religion; and as to religion doing harm as well as good, the facts are so patent that men have often asked whether the evil we must attribute to religion does not outweigh the good. But I would say unhesitatingly not so much that it is wrong as that it is very silly to attack religion in general as Mr Bertrand Russell does. He might just as well attack painting or poetry or music in general, and intelligent people only do that if they are colour-blind or tone-deaf and forget their limitations. There is good and bad and mixed poetry and music, and there is good and bad and mixed religion. Most generalizations about religion such as that "Fear is the root of the whole business," or "Religion makes men good," are mere claptrap, whether advanced by Rationalists or believers. A writer with a deserved reputation as a scientist and philosopher ought not to answer, still less to defend, assertions so futile and uncritical.

Obviously, then, religion has been responsible for much evil in the world. How much it would be difficult to estimate. The crimes committed in the name of liberty have probably been a bagatelle compared with the crimes committed in the name of religion. "Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum"—I gather that even Mr Bertrand Russell with the experience of a long life behind him pointing to the falsity of Latin tags, yet regards this famous line of Lucretius as containing a modicum of truth. Any intelligent and educated religious man recognizes how impressively it summarizes the terrible tragic side to the history of religion. But the religious man, and, indeed, most intelligent and educated men who are not believers, recognize that this is not the whole story of religion. If religion is responsible for much evil, it has also inspired the greatest achievements of men, certainly in music, architecture, the fine arts, literature, and practical social progress, and I should be inclined to add, in pure science also. There is no use in denying either side of the account, and you do not arrive at a judgment about religion by trying to balance the account, condemning religion if the evil exceed the good, and acquitting it if the good outweigh the evil. For both sets of facts point to the same conclusion, and Mr Bertrand Russell must pardon me if I state the obvious conclusion in another Latin tag. The history of religion illustrates better than anything else the truth of the saying, "Corruptio optimi pessima." Mis-

takes in religion are very costly. Truth in religion is supremely important. There is no greater obstacle to human progress than a false religion, and there is no greater influence promoting human progress than true religion. Not even science itself is such a power for good as pure and undefiled religion.[1]

It may, however, be said, This is all very well, but what about the Church? Henry Drummond is reported to have observed on one occasion: "The Church is the great argument against religion." Mr Bertrand Russell feels the weight of this argument, as well he may, and when he denied the position "Religion makes men virtuous," he was not thinking of the religious faith of individuals, but of organized religion. This is the passage in which he states the case: "You

[1] Once more, the contrast between Julian Huxley and Bertrand Russell is significant. While the latter is wasting his time on the foolish generalization "Religion makes men virtuous," and even in the discussion of this proposition is content to overstate the case against religion and to ignore the case for it, the former goes at once to the real issue and combines the two aspects of the truth of the matter in the following paragraphs:

"Just because religion is so powerful and universal, just because it can embrace all human faculties and actions and all aspects of the world about us, therefore it can be a potent and violent force for evil as much as for good.

"*Once this two-edged nature of religion is recognized, its potentialities for harm faced by the religious, its potentialities for good acknowledged by the rationalist,* there will be more chance of progress from low, fixed, undeveloped or under-developed religion, which clogs the wheels of progress, to higher forward-moving developed or developing religion which helps to lead the way.

"An undeveloped religion does impede human faculty.

"A developed religion is one which is so organized that it helps to unify the diverse human faculties and to give each of them the fullest play in a common task." (*Religion without Revelation*, pp. 341, 342. Italics mine.)

find as you look round the world that every bit of progress in humane feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step towards the diminution of war, every step towards better treatment of the coloured races or every mitigation of slavery, every moral progress that there has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by the organized Churches of the world. I say quite deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its Churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world." [1] Before I discuss this paragraph, I must draw attention once again to the way in which Mr Russell shifts his ground. He is discussing what he calls the emotional factor, by which he means the belief that religion makes men good. Many of us are Christians because we believe the Christian religion makes men good. Mr Russell is trying to persuade us to give up being Christians, and to do that he must show that we are mistaken in believing that the Christian religion makes men good. His first argument is that if men ceased to be Christians they might still be good, and his last is that the Christian religion, *as organized in the Churches*, is the principal enemy of moral progress. Whether these arguments be good or bad in themselves, they are certainly irrelevant to the real issue. It is curious how Mr Bertrand Russell's logical acumen deserts him, when he comes to talk about religion! We ask Mr Russell to show that the Christian religion

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 28.

does not help men and women to live good lives, and he replies that *as organized in the Churches*, the Christian religion is the enemy of progress. But the Christian religion *as organized in the Churches* is not the whole of the Christian religion. When we look round the world, we find that every single bit of progress in humane feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step towards the diminution of war, every step towards better treatment of the coloured races, or every mitigation of slavery, every moral progress there has been in the world since the beginning of the Christian Era, has been advanced in the main, though not exclusively, by the consistent support and heroic self-sacrificing leadership of Christian men and women. Even if Mr Russell's paragraph be true in itself, it is only half the truth, and our belief that the Christian religion makes men good remains absolutely justified.

But is Mr Russell's paragraph even a half-truth? It may seem an extravagant paradox, but I am not quite convinced that Mr Russell's second sentence follows from his first. If it could be shown that every moral progress that there has been in the world has been consistently opposed by the organized Churches of the world, should we then be entitled to say deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its Churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world? In his *Outline of Philosophy*, Mr Russell says that for a complete knowledge of Man, we must bring in Sociology. "We may study

[man] in sociology as a unit in various organisms, such as the family and the State." [1] Mr Russell does not follow up this hint, and he does not appear to have paid much attention to sociology. If he had done so, he would have observed that men in corporate bodies, in social institutions, often fall below the level of their moral insight as individuals, often have to acquiesce in compromises, and are usually more cautious and conservative as members of a group than they are when they can act on their individual responsibility. We might formulate a general law about the tendency of corporate bodies, of associations and institutions, to move slowly if they move at all. I should think it might be possible to put it into the form of a differential equation, and to show how the intensification of the conservatism of a corporate body varies with the number of units composing it, the variety or the harmony of their interests, the length of time it has existed, the number of other corporate bodies with which it is in contact, etc., etc. But in any case, bodies corporate are usually more or less conservative. This is true, not only or conspicuously of churches, but of states, of professional associations, literary societies, trade-unions, and ever so many more. Even the British Association for the promotion of science is not entirely free from this taint. Witness the attitude maintained for years by the bulk of its members towards psychical research. The Rationalist Press Association must be a very con-

[1] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 19.

servative body, or it would not have published so old-fashioned and conventional an attack on Christianity as this tract by Mr Russell. The National Secularist Society is so conservative that it has become an anachronism, and Mr Russell would never have perpetrated so out-of-date an utterance if he had not been reacting to the stimulus of the National Secularist gallery. Like the associations I have named, the Churches are apt to be conservative. In consequence, the Churches, some of them most of the time, and perhaps all of them at some times, but not all of them at all times, have opposed fresh discoveries of truth and new experiments in social morality. The Churches, most, if not all of them, have repeatedly but not, I think, uniformly and consistently opposed some of the moral advances to which Mr Bertrand Russell alludes. Does this mean that the organized Churches are the principal enemy to moral progress? Your answer will depend on your view of the relation of conservatism to moral progress. If you hold with Edmund Burke that an element of conservatism is essential to progress—and I for one certainly agree with him—then you will not write off the Churches as the principal enemy of progress because they are naturally conservative bodies. That is what they are there for, and if they tend to put a brake on progress, they at the same time conserve the moral gains of the past. They hinder a lot of false moves which claim to be progressive and are not. The conservatism of the Churches,

like the conservatism of other bodies, is usually a good thing overdone. It is frequently exasperating and not infrequently disastrous, but it is not on the whole so much the principal enemy as the essential support of moral progress.

But I do not admit the general truth of the charge which Mr Russell brings against the Churches. Incidentally he makes no exceptions. This consistent opposition to moral progress has been put up by all the organized Churches. It would be sufficient answer to point out that the Society of Friends, a definitely organized Christian Church, has consistently championed every one of the great causes to which reference is made.[1] We must underline the statement that the Society *as a corporate body* has supported these causes. The Christian religion as organized in one of its Churches at least has been consistently on the side of all these moral advances. Nor does the Society of Friends stand alone. If they have not acted as consistently, all the Churches in England at least have from time to time advocated one or other of the causes named. It would be quite impossible for Mr Bertrand Russell to substantiate his case so far as the church life of England is concerned. But his position is not true even of the older and more conservative Churches like the Church of Rome. I doubt whether a Rationalist

[1] Of course, I recognize that the Society of Friends had to be educated up to its corporate testimonies by heroic pioneers. I might add that the antithesis individuals or corporate bodies does not exhaust the subject. Mr Russell simply ignores the moral and social effects of religious movements like the Evangelical Revival.

historian like the late Professor Bury would have endorsed such a verdict on the Greek Orthodox Church, the case in which I confess it seems to me likely to have most truth, but I am certain no competent Mediævalist would accept this piece of rhetoric as an accurate description of the attitude and influence of the Papacy and the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. Gibbon would have laughed at such a statement if offered as a serious estimate of the Ancient Catholic Church.

It will suffice, however, for my purpose, to cite one moral revolution which we owe almost entirely to the Ancient Catholic Church. In the early days of the Roman Empire, both abortion and the exposure of infants were regarded as normal methods of regulating the population. Among the popular letters recovered from the rubbish-heaps of Egypt is the now well-known letter from a workman Hilarion to his wife, in which he says: "If thou art delivered, if it was a male child, let it (live); if it was female, chuck it out." It is a brutal letter, but it would not have struck the sentiment of the ancient world as abnormal. There is hardly an apologist for Christianity who does not insist without any fear of contradiction on the contrast between the standards of the Christian Church and the current standards of pagan society in this regard. Whether in the preservation of infant-life, or in maintaining the purity of the marriage-relation, the Church definitely established a new social order in Europe.

The teaching of the Roman Church about sexual morality Mr Bertrand Russell criticizes with such harshness and such frequency that the thing is in danger of becoming an obsession to him. This morality is certainly not beyond improvement, and with some of his criticisms I sympathize, but he evidently has no idea either of the long struggle to establish this code or of the moral degradation out of which it lifted Europe. If he had read A. L. Smith's second lecture in *Church and State in the Middle Ages*, he would probably write with more patience and certainly with more understanding. But this is incidental to my main purpose. The important point is that *the new moral standards of the Ancient Catholic Church underlie every one of the causes which Mr Russell says the Churches have consistently opposed.* Every one of those causes depends on a valuation of human life which we owe to Christianity, and on a sense of the sacredness of human life which has been diffused throughout Europe primarily by the influence of the Christian religion as organized in its Churches. Those causes would never have come into being and would never have made any progress at all without the moral foundation laid by the Catholic Church, Ancient and Mediæval.[1]

[1] The matter is dealt with in W. E. H. Lecky's *History of European Morals*, which is published by the R.P.A., and incidentally advertized on the back of Mr Bertrand Russell's tract.

I would commend to Mr Bertrand Russell the following sentences from Guizot's *History of Civilization in Europe*. (Vol. I. pp. 33, 34, Bohn's ed.) I do not know any competent historian who would dispute the truth of them:

"At the end of the fourth and at the beginning of the fifth

There is another one-sided and indefensible paragraph in this section of *Why I am not a Christian.* "You find this curious fact, that the more intense has been the religion of any period and the more profound has been the dogmatic belief, the greater has been the cruelty and the worse has been the state of affairs. In the so-called ages of faith, when men really did believe the Christian religion in all its completeness, there was the Inquisition with its tortures: there were millions of unfortunate women burnt as witches: and there was every kind of cruelty practised upon all sorts of people in the name of

century, Christianity was no longer merely an individual belief, it was an institution; it was constituted; it had its government, a clergy, an hierarchy calculated for the different functions of the clergy, revenues, means of independent action, rallying-points suited for a great society, provincial, national, and general councils, and the custom of debating in common upon the affairs of the society. In a word, Christianity, at this epoch, was not only a religion, it was also a Church.

"Had it not been a Church, I cannot say what might have happened to it amid the fall of the Roman Empire. I confine myself to simply human considerations; I put aside every element which is foreign to the natural consequences of natural facts: had Christianity been, as in the earlier times, no more than a belief, a sentiment, an individual conviction, we may believe that it would have sunk amidst the dissolution of the Empire, and the invasion of the barbarians. . . .

"I do not think that I say more than the truth in affirming that at the end of the fourth and the commencement of the fifth centuries it was the Christian Church that saved Christianity; it was the Church with its institutions, its magistrates, and its power, that vigorously resisted the internal dissolution of the Empire and barbarism; that conquered the barbarians and became the bond, the medium and the principle of civilization between the Roman and barbarian worlds. It is, then, the condition of the Church rather than that of religion, properly so called, that we must look to, in order to discover what Christianity has, since then, added to modern civilization, and what new elements it has introduced therein."

religion."[1] Mr Russell apparently measures the intensity of the religion of any period by the profundity of the dogmatic belief. That is not a Christian standard, nor is it a true scientific standard. Men did not really believe the Christian *religion* in all its completeness in the so-called ages of faith. The Inquisition and witch-burning are not the only characteristic features of Mediæval Christianity, nor the only products of its faith. St Francis of Assisi is more fully representative of Mediæval Christianity than Torquemada. At least if the fervour of their faith is to be held responsible for all the cruelties of Christians in the Middle Ages, we must credit the same fervent faith with the nobleness of many of their aspirations and ideals and with the splendour of their achievements.

It is usually supposed to be the duty of a scientist to face all the facts, and the virtue of a philosopher to see all sides of a question. Where Christianity is concerned Mr Bertrand Russell considers himself exempt from such tiresome obligations. The good life, according to Mr Bertrand Russell, consists in love guided by knowledge. Where Christianity is concerned, Mr Bertrand Russell displays neither love nor knowledge. He deserts his own ideal and prefers hate guided by ignorance. It is strange how animus against Christianity will make hay of a man's scientific and moral standards.

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 27. On this an adult school friend of mine observes: "Bertrand Russell seems obsessed by the number 'millions.' This is an exaggeration; great numbers were burnt, undoubtedly, but not millions."

We may unhesitatingly affirm that another main reason why Mr Bertrand Russell is not a Christian is that he has a very imperfect acquaintance with the history either of the Christian Church or of European morals.

CHAPTER IV

An Estimate of Jesus Christ

In one of his Oxford Lectures on Poetry, dealing with the subject of the sublime, A. C. Bradley recalls a story of a lady who went to Niagara and remarked: "Oh! how pretty!" It is possible to imagine an even less adequate response. If a man were to visit Niagara and on his return were to communicate his impressions in the following form: "Oh, I thought three or four of the rocks at the top of the falls rather fine, but when you go behind the falls there's an infernal smell of damp, and if you approach the falls in the *Maid of the Mist* you are liable to get wet and the noise is decidedly unpleasant," we should doubt whether he had ever seriously looked at the falls. Mr Bertrand Russell's estimate of Jesus makes this kind of impression on my mind. Mr Russell quite likes three or four of Christ's sayings, especially those which enable him to indulge in some pleasant witticisms at the expense of Christians. There's the saying about turning the other cheek. Try it on Mr Baldwin and see what happens. Then "Judge not that ye be not judged,"—that's good advice but Christian magistrates do not take it. Or again, "From

him that would borrow of you, turn not away." Christians forgot that when the question of a Russian loan was before the country. "Sell your goods and give to the poor,"—there's something in that. Mr Russell is not a Christian and so is not bound by it, but Christians ought to do something about it. On the other hand, Jesus was not perfectly wise, because He was mistaken about His second coming. Nor was He perfectly good. Think of that unfortunate saying about the sin against the Holy Ghost. Then He taught the doctrine of hell-fire and eternal punishment. No one can be truly humane who believes such a doctrine. Again, Jesus lost His temper with the people who refused to listen to His preaching. Socrates never did that. Socrates was always bland and urbane. Besides, there are the curious episodes of the barren fig-tree and the destruction of the Gadarene swine. So Mr Bertrand Russell concludes: "I cannot myself feel that either in the matter of wisdom or in the matter of virtue Christ stands quite as high as some other people known to history. I think I should put Buddha and Socrates above Him in those respects." [1]

While I admire the candour of this judgment, I confess to being disappointed with it. I had hoped for something both fresher and profounder from Mr Russell. I do not know which is the more disappointing—the conventional character of his adverse criticisms or the triviality of his

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 26.

praise. He makes no attempt to see Jesus, His teaching and His career, as a whole. And yet how is it possible to estimate the significance of the details which Mr Russell singles out either for praise or censure, without relating them first to what is central in the story of Jesus? I shall confess that if you present me with three or four isolated sayings of Jesus such as Mr Russell selects, I am not at once clear that they are supremely wise. It is only as I relate them both to Christ's conception of God and God's kingdom and to the situation in which He lived and taught, that I begin to appreciate them. Similarly, with doctrines of future punishment and with denunciation of the Pharisees, we must see those things in relation to Christ's mission, before we judge them. There is a significant contrast here between Mr Middleton Murry and Mr Bertrand Russell. Mr Middleton Murry perceives that to judge detail you must at least place yourself somewhere near the centre. You must try to get at the heart of Christ's experience and message. In Mr Murry's case you do get a real appreciation of something very fundamental in the thought of Jesus. And strangely enough, Mr Murry holds that Jesus was mistaken, even worse mistaken than Mr Russell points out, because Mr Murry believes Jesus was not only in error about His second coming, but also misled in regarding Himself as the Messiah. At the same time, Mr Middleton Murry thinks that this mistake was a mistake that only the best of men and perhaps

only the wisest of men could have made. Here you have the estimate of an artist, of a literary critic who sees the prime necessity of trying to grasp wholes. In Mr Russell you have a man whose strength lies in analysis, and when he turns to Jesus, he sees only detached points, and his real power of analysis is exercised only in a rather shallow and conventional manner. The details are not necessarily insignificant nor the criticisms unimportant, but they are in any case an inadequate basis for Mr Bertrand Russell's conclusion.

Moreover, it puzzles me to see why Mr Bertrand Russell accepts the traditional estimate of Jesus, Socrates and Buddha as the outstanding figures in history which are alone worth considering when we are inquiring who is the wisest and best of the sons of men.[1] From Mr Russell's standpoint all three are fundamentally mistaken. To Jesus, God was the supreme reality, and communion with God carried with it the hope of immortality. To Socrates, the idea of the good was ultimate, and duty was the voice of God, and he thought it probable the soul was immortal. Buddha, indeed, ignored or denied God or the gods, and though he apparently believed in some form of reincarnation, he seems to have denied immortality.

[1] The character in history who most fully embodies the spirit of Mr Russell's philosophy is Epicurus. To be consistent, Mr Russell ought to follow Lucretius and hail Epicurus as the saviour of mankind. If, however, he feels that Epicurus, amiable and admirable as he was, cannot really be compared for character and influence with Jesus or Socrates or Buddha, then Mr Russell ought to suspect that there is something wrong with views of religion and ethics which point to Epicurus as the ideal man.

The fundamental principle of his ethics was the suppression of desire. Socrates and Jesus attached a positive value to life and believed in a transcendent world, Buddha denied the transcendent world and likewise denied the positive value of life. Mr Russell denies God and immortality, but wishes to retain a positive value for life. Which is the more serious error, from Mr Russell's standpoint—to affirm what he denies, as Jesus and Socrates do, or to deny what he affirms as Buddha does? In any case, how can Mr Russell regard any one of them as either wise or good? What are his standards of wisdom or excellence?

He gives only one or two hints to guide his readers. One is that a person with a proper degree of kindliness in his nature would not have put fears and terrors about an unforgivable sin or about hell-fire into the world.[1] No person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment.[2] The second is that a vindictive fury against people who will not listen to one's preaching detracts from superlative excellence. "You do not, for instance, find that attitude in Socrates. You find him quite bland and urbane towards the people who would not listen to him; and it is, to my mind, far more worthy of a sage to take that line than to take the line of indignation." If, now, we look at Christ as He appears in the Gospels, taking the Gospel narrative as it stands, we shall discover first that He believed in hell-fire as a punishment for sin,

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 24. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

and secondly, that He had not the philosophic calm of Socrates.

It is impossible to discuss these judgments of Mr Bertrand Russell without prefixing a note on his attitude towards the Gospels and towards the critical study of the Gospels. His impression of critical inquiry is that "Historically, it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him." [1] This is the kind of impression often entertained by men who have little or no acquaintance with the methods of modern historical science. It is also the impression formed in those circles who adhere to the all-or-nothing hypothesis beloved by Rationalist and Fundamentalist alike. On this view you must either accept or reject everything in the Gospels. As Mr Russell indicated, his real judgment is that we must reject everything in the Gospels. He argues his case in *Why I am not a Christian* on the assumption that we can accept everything. Both positions are indefensible. Even with the intention of taking the Gospel narrative as it stands, Mr Russell is inaccurate in quotation and relies on the text of the Authorized Version where it has been condemned by all modern editors including the revisers. Here is Mr Russell's statement :

"Then you all, of course, remember about the sheep and the goats ; how at the second coming He is going to divide the sheep from the goats,

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 22.

and He is going to say to the goats: 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' He continues: 'And these shall go away into everlasting *fire*.' Then He says again: 'If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where there worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.' *He repeats that again and again also.*"[1]

On this we may note, that the second reference to fire is due to Mr Russell himself. The word used is "punishment," and may suggest that "fire" is not to be understood literally. And when Mr Russell says that the phrase about the worm not dying and the fire not being quenched is repeated again and again also, he is himself repeating a copyist's error in the text of Mark ix., an error which has long since been detected. Verses 44 and 46 are probably no part of the true text of Mark ix. If Mr Russell is going to take the Gospels as they stand, he might be expected to take the Gospels as they stand in the best available text, and he might be expected to quote it accurately. Had Mr Russell been a little more critical, he might have noticed that the phrase about wailing and gnashing of teeth, which as he says comes in one verse after another, and which makes it "quite manifest to the reader that there is a certain pleasure in contemplating wailing and

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 25. (Italics mine.)

gnashing of teeth or else it would not occur so often" is almost confined to the Gospel of St Matthew. The phrase occurs once in Luke and six times in Matthew. This suggests that Jesus Himself employed the phrase, but the repeated use of it may be a clue to the outlook of the first evangelist rather than to the mind of Christ. A critical reader of the Gospels would not build anything on the recurrence of the phrase in Matthew. A more profound psychologist than Mr Russell would not assume that the recurrence of the phrase implies a certain pleasure in contemplating the fate symbolized.

Still, when Mr Russell's statement has been stripped of uncritical exaggeration, it remains true that Jesus believed men's decisions and actions here had consequences hereafter, and that He used the imagery and symbols made popular by apocalyptic writers in describing rewards and punishments hereafter, whether in another life or in another age. He certainly used the contrast between the lighted home and the outer darkness to express the difference between finding and missing the Realm of God. He certainly used the images of wailing and gnashing of teeth, as well as of the undying worm, to express the nature of remorse. He likewise used the simile of the fires of Gehenna: not, I think, to mean what hell-fire came to mean in the Middle Ages, but to image the complete destruction of all that is unclean. (See Matt. x. 28.) In studying these sayings of Jesus, it is important to remember that

He is a poet. I do not mean of course that He is an unimportant person whose ideas are of no consequence," but that the literal-minded reader is likely to misinterpret Him.[1] I do not think that the images and symbols which Jesus employed should be interpreted literally, or that they can be unified in a formal scheme in the way in which Renan tried to unify them in his *Vie de Jésus*. We should approach all these sayings of Jesus in the spirit in which Plato directed us to approach his myths. "Christ invested His religious meaning in a form as near as possible to poetry because imaginative conceptions needed imaginative language to convey them." [2]

The question whether a profoundly humane person can really believe in everlasting punishment is a difficult one. I have indicated one or two reasons for doubting whether Jesus believed in eternal punishment though He did believe in eternal loss. As a matter of history, I believe some profoundly humane persons have entertained this belief, though I confess I cannot believe it myself, and my chief obstacle is the way in which I have learnt through Jesus Christ to think both of God and of my fellow-men. But in any case, a profoundly humane person who gauged men's moral responsibilities and perils as Jesus did, would

[1] In *What I Believe*, p. 70, Mr Russell writes with reference to Shelley: "It may be said that a poet is an unimportant person whose ideas are of no consequence." It may be said, but why should Mr Russell repeat it? I cannot believe that he is quite such a Philistine as the serious consideration of so trivial a sentiment would seem to imply.

[2] *Shelley and the Unromantics*, by Mrs O. W. Campbell, p. 252.

have to speak about them as Jesus did, just because He was profoundly humane.

Like Mr Bertrand Russell, when I think of the misery and misunderstanding that have often been associated with it, I sometimes wish the saying about the sin against the Holy Ghost had never been uttered.[1] At the same time, unless you are attributing omniscience to Jesus, you cannot assume that He foresaw or willed these consequences, and you cannot blame Him for them. Difficult as the saying is, I do not doubt that it contains a warning that needed to be expressed and needs to be still remembered. It is possible so to tamper with one's moral judgment as to lose one's intellectual integrity and imperil the health of the soul. If we close our minds to truth and truthfulness, how can we be saved, if it is the truth accepted that makes free ? Is not Christ's saying essentially the scientist's fundamental conviction that we have no refuge but in truth ?

I have assumed that Mr Russell is not attributing omniscience to Jesus, but on p. 25 he bids his readers remember that "Jesus was omnipotent and could have made the devils simply go away [from the Gadarene demoniac]: but He chooses to send them into the pigs." In so far as Mr Russell's arguments are directed against the view that Jesus was all-wise and all-powerful, they are

[1] The ordinary case of a man believing he has committed this sin is one of sex-origin resulting in a fear-obsession which takes this saying as its object. It has nothing to do with the meaning of Jesus. W.F.H.

concerned with another issue than the question, Was He the best and wisest of men? If we take the Gospel of Mark as it stands, I do not think we can claim omniscience and omnipotence for Jesus. But some of Mr Russell's criticisms are only valid if we do think of Jesus as omniscient and omnipotent. The description of Jesus as putting and, I suppose, deliberately putting, terrors into the world through the saying about the unforgivable sin, is only valid if we assume that He foresaw the course of future history. But Mr Russell has already argued that Jesus did not foresee it, since He anticipated the early end of the age. Can Mr Russell logically maintain his criticism of Christ's wisdom on p. 22 along with his criticism of Christ's goodness on p. 24? The criticisms of the goodness of Christ in connection with the Gadarene swine and the cursing of the fig-tree, which Mr Russell develops on pp. 25 and 26, depend for their validity on the attribution of omnipotence to Jesus. Mr Russell is entitled to make these criticisms if he really believes in the omnipotence of Jesus, but not otherwise, I think. Even so, it is time the Gadarene swine were dismissed from discussions like the present. If you take the story as it stands, and assume both the existence of demons and the responsibility of Jesus for sending the demons into the pigs, you cannot hold Jesus responsible for the destruction of the pigs. That was the demons' own idea or perhaps, as an original evangelist of my acquaintance suggests, it shows the good sense of the pigs,

who got rid of the demons as quickly as possible. If you take the story literally, the moral responsibility of Jesus for the loss of the pigs is not evident. If you interpret it a little more critically, there would be even less basis for a moral criticism. The curious story of the fig-tree has always rather puzzled me, as it puzzles Mr Russell. It continues to puzzle me, and I am content for the present to leave it there. Such a strange isolated tradition seems to me to afford no foundation for a moral judgment.[1]

We come back then to what appears to be the main criticism. "One does find [in Christ] repeatedly a vindictive fury against those people who would not listen to His preaching—an attitude which is not uncommon with preachers, but which does somewhat detract from superlative excellence. You do not, for instance, find that attitude in Socrates. You find him quite bland and urbane towards the people who would not listen to him: and it is, to my mind, far more worthy of a sage to take that line than to take the line of indignation."[2] "You will find that in the Gospels Christ said: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" That was said to people who did not like His preaching. It is not really to my mind quite the best tone. . . ."[3]

[1] For a sane imaginative interpretation of the story of the Gadarene demoniac see the chapter in *By an Unknown Disciple*. The pigs were probably frightened by some strange movement of the demoniac. The cursing of the fig-tree is not unlikely to be a parable misunderstood as incident.

[2] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 23. [3] *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

I may point out, once more, that Mr Russell here treats as characteristic of Jesus as presented in the Gospels, a form of address to the Pharisees which is only attributed to Him in Matthew. It is typical of Mr Russell's method of treatment, that his illustration is a phrase which it is doubtful whether Christ ever used. Yet again there is no doubt that Jesus especially towards the end of His life denounced openly and roundly the religious leaders of Israel. If blandness and urbanity are the only virtues or the highest virtues, or always and under all circumstances virtues, then "cadit quaestio," and Mr Russell has won his case. Undoubtedly both Socrates and Buddha were more bland and urbane than Jesus. But here the decisive consideration turns on the mission of each and on each one's conception of his task. It may even be the case that if Socrates or Buddha had been less bland and urbane, either would have been less good, and if Jesus had been more bland and urbane, He would have been less good. It depends entirely on whether the tasks and callings of all three were essentially the same. If Jesus were a sage in the same sense as Socrates or Buddha, then His failure to exhibit the same philosophic calm is fatal to His moral supremacy. But what if His task was different? The old saying of Schlegel is worth repeating: "If Jesus were not greater than Socrates, then a Socrates He was not."

I would submit, at any rate, that the real difference between Jesus on the one side, and Socrates

and Buddha on the other, on this question of patience, is bound up with another profound difference. Jesus lived in the consciousness of facing a crisis in the history of His people and of the world. He felt Himself to be making history. He believed that God's will had been manifested in deliverance and judgment in the past. He believed that God in the sending of John the Baptist and decisively in His own mission was making a new beginning in the world. Neither Socrates nor Buddha possess any such consciousness. They do not exhibit the same personal identity with moral and personal facts, which gave Jesus a moral certainty and authority that other men lack. They have no such sense as Jesus has of history or of divine purpose being wrought out in history. Both have compassion and wisdom, and it is only right they should be bland and urbane towards those who disagreed with them. There was no sense of crisis in their situation or of urgency in their message. Why should there be ? But for Jesus, whether He were right or wrong in His convictions, His fundamental convictions were all different, and imposed a different line of conduct. He stood in the succession of the great prophets. They, too, had denounced those who refused to listen to them, not for the most part in a spirit of vindictive fury, and not because they gave way to personal pique, but because only by this solemn warning could they declare the burden of the Lord as they felt it laid upon them. To talk of vindictive fury in this connection is to

show a complete ignorance of the prophetic consciousness and an utter failure to appreciate the historical situation in the midst of which Christ spoke. Any reader of the Gospels who can understand why on one occasion Jesus rebuked the the chief of the Apostles with the words, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," or why He had compassion on the crowd because they seemed as sheep without a shepherd, or why when He drew nigh to the city He wept over it, may be able to understand why He denounced "Blind leaders of the blind," and said so often, "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites."

It is, I think, obvious that a comparison between Jesus, Socrates and Buddha, based on blandness and urbanity as a criterion, is necessarily superficial and worthless. Given the presuppositions of Jesus, given the situation and His interpretation of it, He would have failed morally if He had been as bland as Socrates and as passive as Buddha. But were these presuppositions valid and did He read the situation aright? As a historian, it is clear to me that His coming coincided with and intensified a life-and-death crisis in the history of the Jewish people and the Jewish religion. Jesus was right in thinking that His rejection as Messiah by the Jews meant the downfall of the Jewish State. I can see also that His challenge to Judaism and His rejection by His people made available for the Gentiles the religious treasures of Israel, to adopt a striking phrase of Dr C. S. Montefiore. I can see that Jesus turned Judaism

into a world-religion just when the Roman world at least was ready for a universal religion. I do not believe that Jesus was mistaken in claiming to be the end, the climax of the Law and the Prophets. In other words, I believe His presuppositions and His reading of the historic situation were true, and if they are true, His place in history is unique, and He will always mean more to us than Socrates or Buddha ever can. He is the wisdom of God and the power of God, as they can never be.

I am not, however, trying to expound in this book the Christian faith or the Christian interpretation of history, but only to explain why Mr Bertrand Russell rejects it. So far as I can see, another main reason for his negations is that he has not yet seriously tried to grasp the central fact of Christ, to see Jesus as a figure in history. Hence he is satisfied with a trivial estimate of Jesus based on conventional and superficial judgments.

CHAPTER V

Moral Arguments for Deity

SINCE the days of Kant, Theists have tended to concentrate on what are called the moral arguments for the existence of God. In the judgment of Mr Bertrand Russell this is evidence of a steady intellectual decline on the part of Theists. "The arguments that are used for the existence of God change their character as time goes on. They were at first hard intellectual arguments embodying certain quite definite fallacies. As we come to modern times they become less respectable intellectually, and more and more affected by a kind of moralizing vagueness." [1] We reach something like the final stage "in what I shall call the intellectual descent that the Theists have made in their argumentations (when) we come to what are called the moral arguments for the existence of God. You all know, of course, that there used to be in the old days three intellectual arguments for the existence of God, all of which are disposed of by Immanuel Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: but no sooner had he disposed of those arguments than he invented a new one, a moral argument, and that quite convinced him." [2]

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 14. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

It will be noticed that Mr Russell contrasts the earlier arguments which he describes as intellectual with the later arguments which he describes as moral, and deduces from this that the later arguments involve an intellectual descent. This rests on a very slipshod use of the term "intellectual." All arguments as arguments are intellectual. The moral arguments are not less intellectual than the earlier ones. If the two terms "intellectual" and "moral" are parallel in Mr Russell's statement, then it must mean that the subject-matter of the earlier arguments is drawn from the nature of the intellect, and the subject-matter of the later is drawn from the nature of morals.[1] But, to assume that because the subject-matter of an argument is the nature of morals rather than the nature of the intellect, the argument is less respectable intellectually and indicates an intellectual descent, involves the quite definite fallacy of using the term "intellectual" in two senses. Mr Bertrand Russell may feel about himself what I certainly feel about him, that when he writes about ethics, his work is intellectually less respectable than when he writes about relativity. But this is due not to the change of subject, but to the fact that Mr Bertrand Russell is more at home in the latter subject than in the former. In any case Mr Russell is an exceptional person, and his example is no basis for a generalization. Quite a number of thinkers do

[1] As it happens, the earlier arguments are not rightly described as "intellectual" in this sense. They are cosmological, not intellectual.

better intellectual work when the subject-matter is morals than they do when the subject-matter is mathematics. Certainly neither a Theist nor anyone else puts himself on a lower intellectual plane when he ceases to discuss the nature of the intellect and turns to discuss the nature of morals. All this talk of an intellectual descent in Theists because in the nineteenth century they have been concerned with moral values and not with natural causation is either pure bluff or simple delusion on the part of Mr Russell.

The transition from what would rightly be called "cosmological" rather than "intellectual" arguments to what may be called "moral" arguments is of course a real one, though there is not the slightest justification for describing the transition as an intellectual descent which Theists have made in their argumentations. It is more important to observe that the earlier and the later arguments correspond to different elements in religious experience, that these elements of experience are not, and perhaps can never be, exhaustively reproduced in formal arguments, and in consequence the refutation of the formal arguments does not necessarily invalidate either the experience or the conclusions drawn from it. Incidentally, when Mr Russell complains that the arguments of modern Theists are more and more affected by a kind of moralizing vagueness, I suppose he is referring to the fact that modern Theists are aware that the experiences which formal arguments attempt to summarize are

richer than the arguments themselves. If so, and if Mr Bertrand Russell does not share this awareness, I should say that modern Theists have a more intelligent appreciation of the situation than Mr Russell has. But when you consider the experiences behind the formal arguments, then it seems to me that there is more religion behind the moral arguments, and the transition from the cosmological to the moral arguments marks, not a desperate attempt to bolster up a cause that has lost its chief intellectual supports, but a deeper intellectual understanding of the nature of religion itself. Without any hesitation, I recognize in the transition an intellectual advance : for the cosmological arguments correspond roughly to those reactions to natural phenomena which have suggested ideas of God to men's minds, whereas the moral arguments correspond to the discovery of God in the realm of values. The knowledge of God that comes to us in the realm of values, particularly in our moral experience, is more intimate, and more important, I think, than the knowledge of God which comes to us through our contacts with Nature. I do not believe that the one can be simply substituted for the other, or that the two can be safely separated, and if I were writing the history of theology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it would be incumbent on me to point out that the transition to the modern emphasis on the moral arguments has often issued in a defect of this kind, *i.e.*, in the supposition that a religious faith can dispense

with a cosmology or be indifferent to it. But broadly speaking, when Kant invented, or to speak more accurately, drew fresh attention to, the moral arguments for Theism, he began to do tardy justice to certain essential features of Christianity, to the truth, for example, that the kingdom of God is within us, and, still more significant, to the truth that for our understanding of ourselves and of our relation to the world, the knowledge of the God of history is more important for us and more accessible to us than the knowledge of the God of Nature. Lest I be thought to be verging towards the kind of ditheism which Mr Wells advocated, or which Mr Russell finds plausible and is not concerned to refute,[1] I had better repeat this in more accurate form. What we may learn of God through history is more important for us than what we may learn of Him through Nature. As a matter of religious experience and conviction, this issue was fought out in the history of Israel. What the prophets fought for was faith in God, as He is revealed in the working out of a moral purpose in history, and what they fought against was faith in a non-moral Nature-God, whether the god of fertility or the god of terrifying natural phenomena. The conflict between the worshippers of Jahweh and the worshippers of Baal means essentially this. Christianity is built on this foundation. Intellectually at the heart of Christianity is a philosophy of history. The appreciation of this

[1] Cf. *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 18.

fact in any full degree came late in Christian thought. There are hints of a philosophy of history in St Paul and in the letter to the Hebrews. Augustine makes an attempt at constructing such a philosophy in his *City of God*. But it has become the primary task of modern theology. The experience on which such a philosophy must rest was not invented by Kant, nor did his moral arguments give such a philosophy even in outline. Kant was not historically-minded enough for the task. But his emphasis on the postulates of practical reason pointed in the right direction. Hegel and his dialectic, Darwin and evolution, both contributed subsequently to make Christian thinkers more fully aware of the real intellectual implications of their faith.

At the basis of any Christian philosophy of history lies the discovery of God in our moral experience. That discovery is manifold. It is bound up first of all with the sense of moral obligation. In ethics, according to Mr Bertrand Russell, we attempt quite unwarrantably to legislate for the universe. The truly religious man does not really attempt anything so ridiculous; but in the realm of ethics he does believe that the universe or the power behind it is legislating for us. When he says, I ought or you ought, he does not mean just "I approve of this or that, and if you want to retain my respect you must do it." He means that this or that line of conduct seems to him to conform to an objective standard of right which we discover and do not imagine or

create for ourselves. When he is overtaken in a fault, the deeply religious man feels a sense of shame and guilt as having wronged an intimate friend. This sense of shame may be so poignant and so overwhelming that he may seem for the moment to forget the human beings he may have wronged, as in the passage in the Psalm : " Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." In the midst of perplexity the religious man has often found the guidance of a wisdom higher than his own. In the midst of moral weakness and failure, he has often known the support of a strength greater than his own. At this point I may appeal once more to Prof. Strowski from whose book on Pascal I quoted in Chapter II. He describes the Christian experience of Pascal and others in the following terms : " The Christian looks within. He sees himself incomplete, suffering, sometimes overwhelmed by the anarchy of a thousand evil forces : sometimes emptied, desolate, abandoned to the point of weariness and even death . . . a creature imperfect and unhappy betwixt being and not-being, who struggles against not-being, and remains incapable of being. Now, at the same moment as the Christian takes stock of his situation, he perceives in himself, or rather dimly feels amid all the evil forces, a good force, which is not part of himself, which he cannot compare with anything else, and which fills him with confidence and joy. In the desert he hears a voice and a call. He does not hesitate : he says it is the voice of God, the force is divine. Henceforth his whole

life consists in the desire that God should bring harmony into him and perfect his being, that God should complete the making of his creature. That is the (Christian) consciousness (or experience)."

So far I have suggested that there is in the moral experience the discovery of the moral law as the will of God, a sense of sin which is more than a consciousness of having wronged one's fellows, and the discovery of help or grace in times of moral failure and despair. Beyond this is the experience of guidance, negative such as Socrates had, and positive such as the ancient prophets of Israel had. Again, there is the historian's discovery that these experiences of guidance are not just isolated or random individual experiences, but form a chain and constitute the main thread of the moral progress of mankind. Once more, we have, in this realm, to recall "the joy of the mystic in harmony with the will of God." Above all, we must note that religious men do not have a moral experience and then infer God from it; they find God in it. They do not discover the moral law and deduce a moral law-giver. They find that there is a power not of themselves making for righteousness, and that they are privileged to work with Him.

This is not an exact or exhaustive account of the moral experience of prophet, saint and mystic, but it will suffice to illustrate the kind of experience that underlies the so-called moral arguments for the existence of God. It will also show that the

two arguments which Mr Russell elects to discuss hardly do justice to that experience, and hardly touch the real issues that are raised by it. The first form of moral argument which he examines asserts that there would be no right or wrong unless God existed. He then dismisses this argument with a favourite dilemma. "Is that difference due to God's fiat, or is it not?"[1] If the former, "then for God Himself there is no difference between right and wrong, and it is no longer a significant statement to say that God is good." But if the latter, "if God's fiats are good and not bad, independently of the mere fact that He had made them, . . . you will then have to say that it is not only through God that right and wrong come into being, but that they are in their essence logically anterior to God."[2] Mr Russell develops the same dilemma with regard to natural law: "Why did God issue just those natural laws and no others? If you say, He did it simply from His own good pleasure and without any reason, you then find that there is something not subject to law, and so your train of natural law is interrupted. . . . If (on the other hand) there was a reason for the laws which God gave, then God Himself was subject to law. . . . You have really a law outside and anterior to the divine edicts, and God does not serve your purpose, because He is not the ultimate law-giver."[3]

For myself, I am almost indifferent as to which

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 17. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 18.
[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 13, 14.

of the two alternatives I accept in what is essentially the same dilemma, for neither horn when examined closely will be found to have a point. To take the second first: If the distinction between right and wrong is in its essence logically anterior to God, and if some higher law behind natural laws lies outside of and anterior to the divine edicts, then the distinction between right and wrong and the law determining natural laws belong to those eternal truths which, according to Mr Russell, do not exist. "It must surely be evident, if we consider the matter, that those truths are wholly incapable of existence, and that what exists is only the knowledge of them."[1] Either, then, the distinction between right and wrong has not come into being at all, or if there be concrete existent rights and wrongs they come into existence through some knowing and willing agent or agents. The statement then that the moral law would not be operative without God's willing it is not rendered either absurd or superfluous by asserting that the distinction between right and wrong is logically anterior to God. Something similar seems to me to be true of natural law. If there is a law anterior to the divine edicts, the intermediary of the divine will is still necessary to bring particular laws into being, to embody them in a concrete world. On the other hand, I do not quite see the difficulty of the other horn of the dilemma. Of course, if we are to imagine God establishing the distinction

[1] *Philosophy of Leibniz*, by Bertrand Russell, p. 180.

between right and wrong by a temporal fiat or introducing the law of contradiction or any other eternal truth at a moment of time, the situation is absurd. But I see no difficulty in saying that such eternal truths form part of God's nature from all eternity. In his book on Leibniz, Mr Bertrand Russell raised a whole series of difficulties, of which I note the following as most relevant: "If we were to say that truths actually constitute God's nature, and if this is what makes them true, then, since we must always distinguish between a proposition and the knowledge of it, the impious consequence follows that God can have no knowledge. Truths are God's states of mind, and *we* know these truths, but God cannot know them, since knowledge is distinct from what is known." But why must we deny self-consciousness to God? Why on earth or why in heaven cannot God know His own states of mind? The consequence seems to me not so much impious as illogical. Nor do I see that if the difference between right and wrong is due to God's fiat, it is no longer a significant statement to say that God is good. We regard it as part of human excellence to live up to one's self-imposed standards, and if God is true to Himself, He is good. But the whole dilemma depends on an antiquated conception of God. The very word "fiat" suggests an Oriental despot, and Mr Russell cannot get it out of his head that God must be an Oriental despot or nothing. Unless God is capricious—non-rational and non-moral—He cannot be God according to

Mr Russell. Mr Russell has fogged himself with the mythological associations of the word "fiat." To suppose that the possible relations of the moral law to God are exhausted by saying that it is either anterior and external to God and so imposed upon Him or else consists of His capricious and arbitrary determinations, shows, not the power of Mr Russell's logic, but the poverty of his imagination.

As a matter of fact, the dilemma is only a piece of logical fencing put up by Mr Russell to amuse his secularist friends because he lacked either the time or the inclination to discuss real issues with them. Mr Russell could quite easily, if he wished, show up the hollowness of his sham dialectic. His real case against the moral arguments for Theism is that he no longer believes in objective standards in ethics. "I am not for the moment concerned with whether there is a difference between right and wrong or whether there is not: that is another question." [1] This other question happens to be the vital question. Mr Russell does not think there is an objective difference between right and wrong; he does not believe in the objective character of the moral law. Now this is worth discussing, and it involves not only the truth or falsehood of Theism, but the possibility of science. For if right and wrong are matters of taste, if in this realm there are no objective standards, then truth and falsehood cease to retain an objective character. If, on the other hand, the

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 17.

distinction between truth and falsehood, between fact and fiction, is not an arbitrary human caprice, but something given in the nature of things, then at once we have the foundations for an objective standard of right and wrong. Truthfulness is a rational and obligatory virtue, lying is a vice; sincerity is right, absolutely right, and sophistry is wrong. The very existence of science involves and depends on an objective ethic. If there is no such thing, as Mr Russell contends in *What I Believe*, truth and falsehood are not separable, and science is a fairy-tale. In philosophy as in ethics, we have no guide but our caprice. No scientific theory is truer than another, and if it were, we are under no moral obligation to accept a true one rather than a false one. No philosophy is truer than another, and it follows that Mr Russell in persuading us to buy his delightful books has taken our money on false pretences, since it is all much ado about nothing. I, however, forgive him, as the ingenuity he displays in trying to convince himself and others that principles which logically destroy the basis of science yet constitute a genuinely scientific philosophy, is at least entertaining and worth the money. As, nevertheless, I believe in science and its future, I prefer to remain a simple Theist.

To return once more to the funny little dilemma with which Mr Russell decided to entertain his friends in lieu of more serious discussion, I do not think that it constitutes a refutation of the first moral argument for Theism as Mr Russell himself

states it. But even if it does, the refutation has little or no bearing on men's discovery of a good will which is actually at work in their lives, and which they hold to be divine.

The discussion of the second argument which Mr Russell elects to refute is even less important. It is that "the existence of God is required in order to bring justice into the world."[1] If you are going to have justice in the universe as a whole you have to suppose a future life to redeem the balance of life here on earth, and so they say there must be a God, and there must be heaven and hell in order that in the long run there may be justice. That is a very curious argument. If you looked at the matter from a scientific point of view, you would say: "After all, I know only this world, I do not know about the rest of the universe, but so far as one can argue at all on probabilities, one would say that probably this world is a fair sample, and if there is injustice here, the odds are that there is injustice elsewhere also." Supposing you got a crate of oranges that you opened and you found all the top layer of oranges bad; you would not argue: "The underneath ones must be good, so as to redeem the balance." You would say: "Probably the whole lot is a bad consignment." And that is really what a scientific person would argue about the universe. He would say: "Here we find in this world a great deal of injustice, and so far as that goes that is a reason for supposing that justice does not rule

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 19.

in the world; and therefore so far as it goes it affords a moral argument against a deity, and not in favour of one." [1]

It is very good to have such a clear statement of the way in which a scientific person would, and should, argue about the universe. The definition of the scientific way of looking at the matter is very helpful. But it is doubtful whether Mr Bertrand Russell would care to be held strictly to it. For if a biologist like Julian Huxley discovers in biology convincing evidence for progress and begins tentatively to speculate about the universe on the strength of the discovery, or if Lloyd Morgan starting from similar data builds up a philosophy of emergent evolution, then Mr Bertrand Russell is the first to cry out, "Oh, it is unscientific to argue from our experience of this world to the nature of the universe. What, take this little wayside planet, this mere flash in the astronomical pan, as a fair sample of the rest of the universe—tut, tut, I never heard such an unscientific argument." That is, in effect, the kind of thing Mr Bertrand Russell says when any one tries to found a philosophy on biology and not on astronomical physics. The two positions may be compatible, but the apparent *volte-face* is curious, and very characteristic of Mr Bertrand Russell. In the meantime, if the sample method of argument is legitimate at all, it may quite rightly be employed to support the moral argument, which may be re-stated not as the argument

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 19.

for remedying injustice, but as the argument for expecting the complete triumph of justice. If we see that justice is in its nature more enduring than injustice, partially but not completely triumphant, then Browning's line, "On earth the broken arc, in heaven the perfect round," expresses a legitimate hope which is supported by our moral experience here, if, "so far as one can argue at all on probabilities, one would say that probably this world is a fair sample of the rest of the universe."

But the whole of Mr Bertrand Russell's discussion is very remote from any living issues in religion. To overthrow the real moral arguments for Deity, it is necessary to show that the deepest experiences of prophets and saints, of mystics and poets, of great men of action as well as of scientists and philosophers, are either illusory in themselves or completely misinterpreted. Clever dialectic such as Mr Bertrand Russell offers is irrelevant and idle chatter. I do not think these experiences can be illusory, and so far as my reflection has gone, the theistic interpretation of them seems to me to be the true one. Since Mr Bertrand Russell has hardly entered upon this, the really important aspect of the modern discussion of the problem of religion, I must not enlarge upon it here.

He does indeed make one or two suggestions in regard to conscience, and this chapter may fittingly close with some consideration of the points involved in those suggestions. He says of

Kant (p. 17) that "in moral matters he believed implicitly in the maxims that he had imbibed at his mother's knee. This illustrates what the psycho-analysts so much emphasize—the immensely stronger hold upon us that our very early associations have than those of later times." In *What I Believe*, Mr Russell adds: "Conscience is a most fallacious guide, since it consists of vague reminiscences of precepts heard in early youth, so that it is never wiser than its possessor's nurse or mother." In his chapter of Ethics in his *Outline of Philosophy* (p. 236), he repudiates the suggestion that moral rules may be made known by revelation. "The philosopher cannot but observe that there have been many revelations, and that it is not clear why he should adopt one rather than another. To this it may be replied that conscience is a personal revelation to each individual, and invariably tells him what is right and what is wrong. The difficulty of this is that conscience changes from age to age." These sentences do not throw much light on the subject of conscience, but they do throw light on the mind of Mr Bertrand Russell. I might in passing make one comment on the philosopher's attitude towards revelation. Why should a philosopher of all people assume either that there is no technique for distinguishing trustworthy revelations from unreliable ones, or that it is impossible and useless to try to construct such a technique? The early Church tried to construct one. They said if a prophet asks for money for himself, or stays more

than three days in one house, he is a false prophet. I do not suggest that this is an adequate test, but why should a philosopher fob the whole thing off in a shabby sentence? Mr Bertrand Russell is a philosopher on such a narrow gauge that he constantly excludes important things as of no importance to a philosopher. Thus in the *Outline of Philosophy* (p. 253), he says of Leibniz that "He was only able to refute this possibility (Solipsism) by bringing in theological considerations, which *whether valid or not* [1] are out of place in philosophy." What a curious assertion! If the theological considerations are valid, they cannot be out of place in philosophy merely because they are theological—unless indeed it is the part of a true philosopher to construct a theory of the universe by deliberately ignoring something he admits to be true. However, to return to conscience, Mr Bertrand Russell's references to the fallacious character of the guidance of conscience, to the fact that conscience is not infallible, make clear why the early Quakers, for example, refused simply to identify the inner light with conscience. The belief that God's guidance may be found and is found by individuals in moral decisions does not rest on the supposition that "conscience invariably tells them what is right and what is wrong." It frequently happens that conscience is misinformed and misleads. It is also possible to be the subject of divine guidance and to misread it. But even this does not in-

[1] Italics mine.

validate the fact of divine guidance, or enable us to dispute or deny its significance in history. While conscience is not infallible, it is a little difficult to be satisfied with a theory of conscience that equates it "with vague reminiscences of precepts heard in early youth." To begin with, conscience is more than a collection of precepts, whether heard in early youth or deduced from some rational principle or revealed in some other way. To treat conscience as a collection of maxims is to confuse knowing with the thing known, the framing of a moral judgment with a guiding principle. But even supposing that a moral crisis is resolved for us through a process of mnemic causation which brings into our mind something said to us by mother or nurse when we were young, what then? The reminiscence may still be the voice of God, the way of personal revelation. The following passage from *St Joan* is pertinent:

JOAN. I hear voices telling me what to do; they come from God.

ROBERT. They come from your imagination.

JOAN. Of course. That is how the messages of God come to us.

If it be true that conscience consists of vague reminiscences of precepts heard in early youth, then again and again such vague reminiscences have guided men right and have proved to be messages from God. But it is not true. If it were true, if conscience be never wiser than its possessor's nurse or mother, it would be quite

impossible to explain how through loyalty to conscience men have been able to deal aright with new moral situations or to carry through a new moral initiative in an old accepted situation. Was Socrates or Amos or Jeremiah no wiser than the respective mother or nurse of each? We have no biographical material for a final decision, but not the slightest probability attaches to the answer which Mr Bertrand Russell is obliged to give to such a question on his singularly naïve theory of conscience.

Finally, take the particular instance of Kant. If he really learnt his doctrine of the categorical imperative at his mother's knee, or if he derived from her his well-known maxims about treating persons as ends and not as means, and about acting only in ways in which you would wish every one to act, his mother must have been a very remarkable woman, and Kant would have been a great fool if he had let go or neglected her early counsels. If this account of Kant be true, then we can only say that his reverence for his mother gave him a view of morals which both philosophically and ethically is superior to the findings of Mr Bertrand Russell's enlightened scepticism. But I very much doubt if Kant was morally tied to his mother's apron-strings in the way Mr Russell suggests. In any case, Mr Russell should beware of invoking the psycho-analyst. For the psycho-analyst will be just as ready to account for Mr Russell's scepticism as for Kant's moral conservatism. If Kant is explained by a mother-fixation, Mr

Russell is just as easily and truly explained by a rebel-complex or a power-complex or Narcissism or a Whig inheritance. Sauce for the moral goose is likewise sauce for the sceptical gander.

CHAPTER VI

The So-called "Intellectual" Arguments for Deity

THE discussion of the time-honoured proofs of the existence of God has often aroused in believers and unbelievers far greater interest than it deserves. You would think at times that if one or other of these proofs is found valid, then God is allowed to exist; and if they are all found inconclusive, then God ceases to exist. A modern Lucian might imagine God listening to Mr Bertrand Russell in the Battersea Town Hall and saying at the close: "Well, after all, I don't exist: I thought I did, but I don't. I now see that the arguments on which My existence depends are fallacious, so I shall retire." It is hardly necessary to remind ourselves that the existence of God in no sense depends on the issue of these discussions. Even man's belief or disbelief in the existence of God depends very little on these arguments. Very few sensible people cease to believe in God because they find these arguments inconclusive. Still fewer are led to any real belief in God because they find one or other of these arguments impressive. But as some interesting points arise in the course of Mr Bertrand Russell's handling of them, we will carry the discussion a little further.

He selects for examination three "intellectual" arguments—the First Cause argument, the Natural Law argument, and the argument from Design.

The First Cause argument, as Mr Bertrand Russell states it, is not less fallacious than he represents it as being. But this is the form in which the argument is not worth discussing. If by First Cause you mean the first link in a temporal chain of causation, there is, as Mr Russell says, no reason to regard the first link as any more divine than any later link. Moreover, the very idea of a beginning is dubious. But I did not know that anybody nowadays talked about a First Cause in this sense. In the form in which the argument is important, we do not understand by the word "first," first in a temporal series; we mean the primary underlying substratum of all things, the ground of existence, that which sustains the universe. This interpretation is very old. Take this passage from Justin Martyr's dialogue with Trypho. "'But what do you call God?' said he. 'That which always maintains the same nature and in the same manner and is the cause of all other things—that indeed is God.' So I answered him." The argument that asserts the necessary existence of such a First Cause seems to me to be valid. At least it cannot be refuted by the teaching which James Mill gave to his son.[1] On this definition of God, the question "Who

[1] "My father taught me that the question, 'Who made me?' cannot be answered, since it immediately suggests the further question, 'Who made God?'" J. S. Mill's *Autobiography*, quoted in *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 11.

made God ?" is absurd. The man who asks it is not thinking what he means by God. And if this fallacy of regression is involved in this form of the First Cause argument, then the failure of the argument is as devastating to Mr Bertrand Russell's philosophy as to Theism. If we may not search for a First Cause in this sense, then we may not believe in electrons and protons or pass beyond them to the neutral stuff in which Mr Russell believes. The real weakness from the Theist's standpoint of the First Cause argument in what I take to be its valid form is not that it involves the cheap fallacy of the Indian's elephant and tortoise,[1] but that, as Mr Russell notes in his book on Leibniz, so far as it goes, the argument points in the direction of Spinoza's pantheism. I think we might say generally, that the problem presented by these so-called proofs is not that they fail to prove God's existence, but they do not suggest the same kind of God. In modern discussions, the question of the existence of God has fallen into the background. The difficult questions are the questions of His nature and attributes.

Mr Bertrand Russell's discussion of the Natural Law argument contains matter of greater interest. Any Theists who based their faith on a confusion between natural and human laws are triumphantly routed. I suppose such Theists exist, and I am not sorry to see them routed. And Mr Russell's

[1] The Indian's view that the world rested upon an elephant and the elephant upon a tortoise: and when they said, "How about the tortoise?" the Indian said, "Suppose we change the subject." (*Op. cit.*, p. 11.)

argument is very instructive. He tells us that we no longer have the sort of natural law that you had in the Newtonian system. "A great many things that we thought were natural laws are really human conventions." Other laws are "statistical averages such as would emerge from the laws of chance: and that makes this whole business of natural law much less impressive than it formerly was." Quite so. But the people who were most impressed by this whole business of natural law were not the Theists but the Rationalists. It was their firm faith in Nature as a cast-iron system determined by law that led them to proclaim the impossibility of miracle and the irrationality of prayer. If the changed conception of natural law beats the Theist with whips, it chastises the Rationalist with scorpions. To change the metaphor, the Rationalist has lost his armour wherein he trusted, and the weapons have been struck out of his hand. This changed conception of natural law has deprived the secularists whom Mr Russell was addressing of their main grounds for rejecting religion. It was a pity he did not tell them so. He would have done more for intellectual and moral progress if, instead of refuting obsolete arguments for Theism he had explained to the secularists that the foundations of their crude materialist philosophy have been broken up. I really am rather sorry for the Rationalists, for I have a kindly feeling towards them, partly because, like Mr Bertrand Russell, I enjoy from time to time meeting with people who put forward hard

intellectual arguments embodying, as it seems to me, certain quite definite fallacies, and partly because in the perpetual spring-cleaning required in man's intellectual habitation, I am inclined to regard them as allies in getting rid of rubbish and superstitions. I find them embarrassing and clumsy helpers because they will insist on emptying out the baby with the bath, and constantly seek to throw real treasures on the rubbish heap. Still, I am sorry to see the Rationalist housemaid standing helpless without either brush or pan. But that is her situation, since law has ceased to be impressive, and cause has lost its vitality.

It is not only the crude materialism of the Secularist that has gone by the board; Mr Bertrand Russell's own creed now stands in more urgent need of revision than the Prayer Book. When he wrote *What I Believe*, he thought physics might be reduced to what he calls chronogeography. "The laws of these changes (changes of electrons and protons) can apparently be summed up in a small number of very general principles which determine the past and the future of the world when any small section of its history is known. Physical science is thus approaching the stage when it will be complete, and therefore uninteresting. Given the laws governing the motions of electrons and protons, the rest is merely geography—a collection of particular facts telling their distribution throughout some portion of the world's history. The total number of facts of geography required to determine the

world's history is probably finite. . . ."[1] Now, however, in the *Outline of Philosophy*, we read: "Formerly (*i.e.* when Mr Russell wrote *What I Believe*) it was thought that the equations of physics suffice theoretically to determine the course of affairs in the physical world, given all the facts about some finite stretch of time, however short. Now it appears that this is not the case, so far as the known equations are concerned. The known equations suffice to determine what happens in empty space, and statistical averages as to what happens to matter; but they do not tell us when an individual atom will absorb or radiate energy. Whether there are laws, other than those of statistics, governing the behaviour of an individual atom in this respect, we do not know."[2] Again, in *What I Believe*, Mr Russell wrote: "Undoubtedly we are part of Nature, *which has produced our desires, our hopes and fears, in accordance with laws which the physicist is beginning to discover.* In this sense we are part of Nature: in the philosophy of Nature we are subordinated to Nature, the outcome of natural laws and their victims in the long run."[3] However, in the *Outline of Philosophy*, Mr Russell is quite clear that psychology will never be reduced to physics. "No amount of physics can ever tell us all that we do in fact know about our own percepts."[4] So Mr Russell's creed is under revision. No doubt

[1] *What I Believe*, p. 10. [2] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 155.
[3] *What I Believe*, p. 23. (Ital. mine.)
[4] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 295.

in the New Year we shall be able to read a new booklet, *What I Believe Now*, and a new tract, *Why I am not yet a Christian.*

It is time to turn to the argument from Design.

Mr Bertrand Russell assured his audience that they knew the argument from Design. But if they accepted his statement of it as adequate, they clearly did not know it; while if he himself thought he was stating it adequately, he has clearly forgotten it. In any case, he put the argument in its silliest form, a form in which no one would now defend it. The argument from Design, according to Mr Bertrand Russell, is the view that the world has been made for our benefit.[1]

[1] The entertaining parody which Mr Russell offers of this argument hardly excels the unconscious humour of some of its extravagant defenders. Take this from Chrysippus.

"In his work *Concerning Nature*, Book V, Chrysippus writes:

"'Bugs are serviceable for waking us up in the morning: mice teach us to be careful where we put things.'"—Bevan, *Later Greek Religion*, p. 24.

But even in what I have called its silliest form, the argument rests on undeniable fact and contains an important element of truth. It is a simple fact that "If the world was ever so little different we could not manage to live in it." Mr Russell may be content to regard this fact as the outcome of chance or accident which he will describe as lucky or unlucky according to his mood. But the Stoic interpretation of this fact as due to providence is certainly still possible and, I should have said, is certainly more probable than the Epicurean theory of blind chance which Mr Russell prefers. In any case to demonstrate the folly of supposing that everything has been designed primarily and exclusively for man's benefit, does not prove either that there is no design in the world as a whole or that nothing in the world is intended for human advantage. If someone were to argue that the Dardanelles campaign was the central feature of the War, and that everything in every other field was subordinate to it or dependent on it, the refutation of such an extravagant assertion would not establish the conclusion that the Dardanelles campaign had no

That view still finds vigorous expression in that admirable song, "The Leather Bottèl," where the writer surveys the world around, and the wondrous things that do abound, culminating in true patriotic fashion with an allusion to the British Navy, and concludes that all is for one end, the use of man. Whether this view can be found elsewhere, I do not know, and Christians can scarcely be expected to defend the theology of the Leather Bottèl. The real argument from Design, the argument that for a time made Voltaire a Deist, is the old argument from the natural order, particularly the order of the heavens which, it was thought and is thought still, can hardly have come into being without plan or design. The real argument from Design is not based on the assumption that everything has been made for our convenience, but on the broad fact of order in the universe, on the adjustment of organ to function in living creatures, on the purposeful activities of living organisms, and on the fact of progress discernible in biology and in human history. Voltaire's jibe about the nose being obviously designed as a support for spectacles does not touch the real evidence for design in Nature. I suppose even Mr Bertrand Russell would not argue that we happen to have noses and so find it convenient to use them for breathing

plan or significance at all. Mr Russell seems to think that the overthrow of an anthropocentric view of the Universe makes it impossible or ridiculous to believe in any kind of design in the world or in human life. But such a contention has no logical validity whatever.

purposes, just as we accidentally find them useful as supports for spectacles. After all, there is design even about the nose.

As to Darwinism destroying the argument for Design, that requires a little qualification. The most interesting thing about Darwinism is not that it has rendered antiquated certain interpretations of the design of the universe, or shown to be erroneous certain old ideas of the method of creation, but that it is quite incompatible with the mechanical interpretation of the world with which Rationalism has been long identified. Darwin, like Einstein, delivered deadly blows to Secularist materialism.[1] But Darwinism is not a

[1] "This rapid outline of a thoroughgoing organic theory of Nature enables us to understand the chief requisites of the doctrine of evolution. The main work, proceeding during this pause at the end of the nineteenth century, was the absorption of this doctrine as guiding the methodology of all branches of science. *By a blindness which is almost judicial as being a penalty affixed to hasty, superficial thinking, many religious thinkers opposed the new doctrine: although, in truth, a thoroughgoing evolutionary philosophy is inconsistent with materialism.* The aboriginal stuff, or material, from which a materialistic philosophy starts is incapable of evolution. This material is in itself the ultimate substance. Evolution, on the materialistic theory, is reduced to the rôle of being another word for the description of the changes of the external relations between portions of matter. There is nothing to evolve, because one set of external relations is as good as any other set of external relations. There can merely be change, purposeless and unprogressive. But the whole point of the modern doctrine is the evolution of the complex organisms from antecedent states of less complex organisms. The doctrine thus cries aloud for a conception of organism as fundamental for Nature. It also requires an underlying activity—a substantial activity—expressing itself in individual embodiments, and evolving in achievements of organism. The organism is a unit of emergent value, a real fusion of the characters of eternal objects, emerging for its own sake."—From *Science and the Modern World*, by A. N. Whitehead, p. 157. (Italics mine.)

complete account of evolution. Rationalists like to think that Darwin has explained everything. Darwin himself did not think so. But then Darwin was a scientist. And it is surprising that Mr Bertrand Russell should back Darwinism so unreservedly as he appears to do. Darwinism is summed up in the motto "Natura nihil facit per saltum," and no one scorns this motto more wholeheartedly than Mr Bertrand Russell. How he reconciles his condemnation of this Latin tag with his booming of Darwinism passes my comprehension. But even if Darwinism were a complete and satisfying explanation of evolution on the present state of our knowledge, and though it modifies, as it certainly does modify, earlier conceptions of the plan of the world, it does not and cannot eliminate design from the world, or make it irrational to seek for design in the universe, though our previous ideas of the actual design have to be revised. For Mr Bertrand Russell himself points out in *Mysticism and Logic* (p. 208): "We have found that a system with one set of determinants may very likely have other sets of a quite different kind, that, for example, a mechanically determined system may also be teleologically and volitionally determined." So neither Laplace nor Darwin have rendered a teleological view of the world either impossible or improbable. As a philosopher, Mr Bertrand Russell is well aware of this, but he lets his credulous and gullible secularist friends go on believing that Darwin has somehow excluded design from the world.

As it happens, Theistic philosophers like Canon C. E. Raven, make much more of Darwin than Mr Bertrand Russell, who writes an *Outline of Philosophy* and does not find it necessary to mention in his index or discuss in his text either Darwin or evolution or biology. Yet he supposes he has constructed an adequate philosophy of Nature on the basis of modern science!

The other aspect of the argument from design is concerned with the question whether this is the best possible universe. God's reason for the laws He issued to Nature must be "to create the best universe, although you would never think it to look at it." [1]

This point Mr Russell expands as follows: "When you come to look into this argument from Design, it is a most astonishing thing that people can believe that this world, with all the things that are in it, with all its defects, should be the best that omnipotence and omniscience has been able to produce in millions of years. I really cannot believe it. Do you think that, if you were granted omnipotence and omniscience, and millions of years in which to perfect your world, you could produce nothing better than the Ku-Klux-Klan, the Fascisti, and Mr Winston Churchill? Really I am not much impressed with the people who say: 'Look at me: I am such a splendid product, that there must have been design in the universe.' I am not very much impressed by the splendour of those people. Therefore, I think that this

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 14.

argument of Design is really a very poor argument indeed." [1]

This may be a very poor argument indeed, but it is not so poor as Mr Russell's answer. To me, I confess, it seems a very astonishing thing that a philosopher could imagine that you could decide whether a changing and developing universe is the best possible universe by looking at it and taking a cross-section of it at a given moment. How can you judge a dynamic system by a static standard? At least I should never try to prove that the universe is the best possible universe by asserting that, as it stands, it is incapable of improvement. As a Christian, I pray the Lord's Prayer, which implies that the world needs a good deal of improving. It is no part of the Christian faith that the world, as it stands, is perfect. As to omnipotence and omniscience producing nothing better than the Ku-Klux-Klan, the Fascisti and Mr Winston Churchill, I would observe first, that it is much easier for me to believe that omniscience and omnipotence have produced Ku-Klux-Klan, the Fascisti and Mr Winston Churchill, than to believe that Mr Bertrand Russell's neutral stuff, his strings of minimal events, have produced them. It is no doubt strange that these phenomena should exist, but after all, omnipotence literally means *capable de tout*, and *tout* includes even Ku-Klux-Klan, the Fascisti and Mr Winston Churchill. As the Trinity don said of the Johnians, they also are

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 15.

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God's creatures. Anyhow, Mr Russell's strings of events could not produce them unless God pulled the strings, and unless the persons concerned did a little tugging on their own account. (By the way, I thought the usual difficulty with the facts to which Mr Bertrand Russell alludes was not their incompatibility with omniscience and omnipotence, but with the Divine goodness. Has not Mr Russell muddled his brief ? Even on this score, however, the fact that God tolerates the Ku-Klux-Klan, the Fascisti and Mr Winston Churchill, shows at least that God is more charitable than Mr Bertrand Russell.) In the second place, the Ku-Klux-Klan, the Fascisti and Mr Winston Churchill are neither the best nor the worst that God has produced. There have been, and there are, better organizations in existence than the Ku-Klux-Klan and the Fascisti. For example, there is the No Conscription Fellowship. I am inclined to think that God, like Mr Bertrand Russell, prefers the No Conscription Fellowship to the Ku-Klux-Klan, but I doubt if He would regard even the No Conscription Fellowship as His best. Then, brilliant as Mr Winston Churchill is, there have been more trustworthy historians, though few more readable, and finer statesmen, though few more industrious. Really I am ashamed to labour such an obvious point.

As to the strange people who say to Mr Russell : "Look at me, I am such a splendid product, etc." I think Mr Russell should try a change of company.

If he left the Secularists for a bit, and chummed up with some simple Christians, he would not hear so much nonsense. But if he intends this as a refutation of the kind of admiration for the human body and the mind of man which men of genius like Shakespeare and Sir Thomas Browne have entertained, then I think Mr Bertrand Russell is off the track. No profound philosopher takes a mean view of his fellows.

CHAPTER VII

The Soul and Immortality

In his address *Why I am not a Christian*, Mr Bertrand Russell was unable, through lack of time, to take up the subject of the immortality of the soul, but he does discuss it in his earlier book, *What I Believe*. There he records his conviction that "If we were not afraid of death, I do not believe that the idea of immortality would ever have arisen." He resorts to his usual explanation of men's transcendental beliefs. The root of the whole thing is fear—fear of defeat, fear of death. If the idea of immortality is taken to include the primitive belief in Sheol or Hades, the underworld of the shades, I doubt if anthropologists would agree with Mr Bertrand Russell in tracing such beliefs to the fear of death. However, not only the concept of immortality, but also the concept of the fear of death needs analysis. In a previous sentence Mr Russell attributes the belief in immortality to the desire to live long. Is the fear of death the same thing as the desire to live long? If so, why should any man be ashamed of it? Does not Mr Bertrand Russell himself desire to live long? A belief inspired by a desire so natural and legitimate can hardly be dismissed

as irrational, and since the desire is not likely to be eradicated, the belief will probably not die out. If, however, Mr Bertrand Russell distinguishes between the fear of death and the desire to live long, then on his own showing he is wrong in attributing the belief in immortality simply to the fear of death. I do not myself believe that either the fear of death as ordinarily understood, or the simple desire to live long, accounts for the belief in immortality. Very few people desire immortality because, if they did not, they would "shiver with terror at the thought of annihilation." The world is not peopled with Claudios from *Measure for Measure*, though I suppose every one at some time or other has been moved by the outburst: "Oh, but to die and go we know not where; To lie in cold obstruction and to rot." But neither primitive beliefs about the shades, nor higher beliefs about future blessedness really depend much on the fear of death. Primitive beliefs spring from dream-experience rather than from fear of death. Furthermore, in spite of what Mr Bertrand Russell says about "Happiness being none the less true happiness because it must come to an end; and thought and love not losing their value because they are not everlasting," the desire for immortality and the hope of it are nursed by the higher values of life. I do not say that happiness and love lose all their value if we cannot believe in immortality, but I do say unhesitatingly that the truest happiness and the truest love are such

that we cannot but associate with them the hope of immortality. I do not think we love in the fullest sense if we do not desire immortality for those we love. I remember in my undergraduate days an occasion when John Ellis McTaggart read a paper on Immortality to a College Society. The late Dr McTaggart rejected Theism, but believed in personal immortality, and he put the case with his usual subtlety. As we came away, a friend said to me: "Well, he has no real convincing arguments, but he loves Mrs McTaggart." I thought this a clever summary and criticism at the time, but some time later I recounted this to an older friend, one of our maturest philosophers, and he said: "Yes, but what better argument could he have than his love for his wife?" Love is the life that lasts for aye, and the man who does not understand this does not yet know what love really means. What is true of love between the sexes is also true of friendship. You have only to re-read Milton's *Lycidas* or Shelley's *Adonais* to understand the real reasons why the idea of immortality has arisen. As Shelley saw clearly, the belief in immortality does not gain much from the arguments, or as he called them, the sophisms of metaphysicians.[1] The root of it is the passion-

[1] Though Shelley was a poet, his ideas on immortality seem to me of more consequence than those of Mr Bertrand Russell on the same subject. I may therefore illustrate the reference in the text with the following sentences from Mrs Campbell's *Shelley and the Unromantics*, pp. 181, 182:

"Whatever" (wrote Shelley) "may be his (man's) true and final destination, there is a spirit within him at enmity with nothingness and dissolution.

"At the end of his life in his notes to Hellas, he merely repeats

ate desire for immortality, a desire nursed by positive values not by negative fears. If Mr Bertrand Russell thinks this positive desire for immortality is nothing but the fear of death, it only shows how completely he misunderstands some of the deepest things in human nature, just as his dictum "*All* fear is bad" reveals his weakness as a psychologist.

At the same time, the metaphysical arguments for the immortality of the soul seem to me stronger than Mr Bertrand Russell recognizes. He disposes of the metaphysicians in the following paragraph:

"Metaphysicians have advanced innumerable arguments to prove that the soul *must* be immortal. There is one simple test by which all these arguments can be demolished. They all prove equally that the soul must pervade all space. But as we are not so anxious to be fat as to live long, none of the metaphysicians in question have ever noticed this application of their reasonings."[1]

I cannot think of any of the familiar arguments to which this simple test can be applied with the consequences indicated. The test seems to rest on two assumptions, both of which are fallacious. One is that indefinite continuance in time involves of necessity indefinite extension in space. The other is that to pervade all space is the same thing

his conviction that until better arguments can be produced than sophisms which disgrace the cause, man's passionate desire for immortality 'must remain the strongest and only presumption that eternity is the inheritance of every human being.'"

[1] *What I Believe*, p. 18.

as to be fat. If these assertions be true, we must assume that when Keats wrote :

> A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,
> Its loveliness increases ; it will never
> Pass into nothingness ;—

he was unwittingly committing himself to the proposition that every day and in every way a lovely object gets fatter and fatter. In spite of the present popularity of space-time, there is no such correlation between continuance in time and extension in space as the test presupposes. In a review of the *Analysis of Matter* in the *New Statesman*, Mr Amos says : "Bertrand Russell insists upon the consideration that however conducive it may be to logical elegance to treat time as homogeneous with space, 'in the world of percepts the distinction between space and time does really exist.'" In his anxiety to score a point against metaphysicians, Mr Russell forgets, in proposing this test, a distinction on which elsewhere he insists. A metaphysician who held the soul to be in some sense corporeal would be perfectly justified in claiming that the soul might continue indefinitely in time without committing himself to the view that the soul must extend indefinitely in space. But most metaphysical arguments for the immortality of the soul start from the assumption that the soul is in its nature non-corporeal and non-spatial. Certainly this involves freedom from the limitations of space, and the metaphysicians have been fully aware of this. They have claimed that the soul can pervade

space just as thought or even music may. But to pervade space in this sense is not to be fat. The music of a violin pervades space in a concert-hall, but we do not describe it as fat. If the music is broadcasted, it pervades more space, but we should hardly say it had become fatter. In fact, in order to pervade space it is better to be thin than fat. If Mr Russell continues to confuse things physical and things psychical in this way, we shall expect him to argue that you cannot describe a man as large-minded without at the same time implying that he is fat-headed.

Mr Leonard Woolf says of this paragraph: "Mr Russell's brilliancy is amazing. No one but he could have put into just over one hundred words the devastating argument on p. 18 against the metaphysicians." It is indeed a devastating argument, but I do not think it is the metaphysicians who are devastated. It is an instance of the amazing power of prejudice in blinding even very able men like Bertrand Russell and Leonard Woolf to fallacies that would otherwise be obvious at once.

This simple and utterly fallacious test is not the real difficulty in the way of the metaphysician. In my judgment Mr Bertrand Russell advances a much more serious issue when he writes: "Whoever considers conception, gestation and infancy cannot seriously believe that the soul is an indivisible something, perfect and complete throughout this process. It is evident that it grows like the body and that it derives both from the

spermatozoon and from the ovum, so that it cannot be indivisible."[1] Clearly the strongest position for the metaphysician would be that of Plato and Dr McTaggart, the assertion of pre-existence as well as post-existence. This does not necessarily involve, as Mr Russell seems to think, a view of the soul as complete and perfect throughout the process of an incarnation. No philosopher who defends pre-existence is obliged to assume that the experience of the soul in the body makes no difference, falls like water off a duck's back. But the facts of heredity, the fact that we do apparently derive soul as well as body from our parents, make the pre-existence theory of the soul very difficult. I think it justifies Mr Bertrand Russell in arguing that the soul is not in its nature indivisible.

While I grant that, I still feel that Mr Bertrand Russell himself underrates both the actual and the potential unity of the self, and in consequence underrates its capacity for persistence. One of the least satisfactory features of the *Outline of Philosophy* is the treatment there meted out to the self. Mr Bertrand Russell thinks that Descartes did not carry the process of doubt far enough when he said: "I think or I doubt, therefore I am." He should have realized that the self was inferential. All he was entitled to say was: "There is thinking, or there is doubt." Do thoughts imply a thinker? "Why should not a thinker be simply a certain series of thoughts,

[1] *What I Believe*, p. 18.

connected with each other by causal laws ?" Not of course ordinary causal laws, but peculiar causal laws. "A person is not a single entity, but a series of events linked together by peculiar causal laws." These laws are roughly laws of mnemic causation which include all that went under the title of the old laws of association, as well as much of the new learning of the Behaviourists. "As a matter of fact, 'I' seems to be only a string of events, each of which separately is more certain than the whole." In the end we must reject "things" and "persons" as ultimately valid concepts. "I say, 'I sit at my table,' but I ought to say, 'One of a certain string of events causally connected in a sort of way that makes the whole series called a "person" has a certain spatial relation to one of another string of events causally connected with each other in a different way and having a spatial configuration of the sort denoted by the word "table."' I do not say so, because life is too short : but that is what I should say, if I were a true philosopher." I confess I cannot believe that a true philosopher would say anything of the kind, even if he had eternity before him. For apart from the fact that the phrase "causally connected in a sort of way that makes the whole series called a 'person'" is a very loose inexact expression, and the causal connection suggested needs closer definition, the true philosopher would discover that by this phrase he was landed in an infinite regression. For if his son were to ask who calls the series a "person," he would have to continue, "called a

'person' by the consent and agreement of a number of individual members of certain strings of events causally connected in a sort of way that makes the whole series called a "person" by the consent and agreement of a number of individual members, etc., etc., *ad infinitum*. He would then have to explain that this calling of the whole series a person is not a momentary connection between single units of certain strings of events causally connected in the sort of way, etc., but that by a special law of mnemic causation the convention was handed from member to member in each and every one of these strings of events causally connected, etc., and in the end I cannot help thinking the philosopher would find it more philosophical as well as shorter to say: "I sit at my table." He would at least recognize that Mr Russell's elaborate formula does not give the whole content of the more homely phrase.

When we first learn the art of composition, we are taught to avoid the use of the first person singular, to replace "I say" by "it is said"; or "I think" by "it is thought." But it is not possible to eliminate the self in this way. If Mr Bertrand Russell had written in the phrase cited not "called," but "which we call," or "which men call," he would have seen that the true philosopher was stultifying himself.

This is not the only instance where Mr Bertrand Russell adopts the same method, unconsciously no doubt, to eliminate the self. In *What I Believe* (p. 12) he says: "We cannot suppose that an

individual's thinking survives bodily death, since that destroys the organization of the brain and dissipates the energy which utilized the brain-tracks." If that were an exhaustive analysis of an individual's thinking, the conclusion would hold. But a sentence or two earlier, Mr Bertrand Russell refers to "the energy *used* in thinking." Now who or what uses the energy? It can hardly be the brain and the brain-tracks. At least it is a curious philosophy which assumes that the brain uses the energy and at the same time the energy utilizes the brain. By speaking of *the energy used*, Mr Bertrand Russell cuts the whole problem.[1] Again, when he says: "As a matter of fact, 'I' seems to be only a string of events, each of which separately is more certain than the whole," to whom or to what does "I" *seem* to be only this?

This basing of a theory on the grammatical possibility of eliminating the first personal pronoun is exactly the same fault as that which Mr Bertrand Russell charges on believers in the self. The whole of Mr Bertrand Russell's theory of the incidental character of the self is "a hasty transference to reality of ideas derived from grammar." Mr Russell, too, is treating "categories of grammar as categories of reality," or, more exactly, he is eliminating forms of reality by tricks of grammatical composition.

[1] A man who discovered a derelict engine and deduced the death of the engine-driver from the facts that the steam had evaporated and the engine was becoming scrap-iron, would be in a position strictly analogous to that of Mr Russell in *What I Believe*.

What, after all, is the self which uses energy along the brain-tracks? Can it be adequately described as a linking of events by peculiar causal laws? Is it really possible to revive at this time of day the theory that when we say we have two successive thoughts "we ought to mean only that there are two successive thoughts which have causal relations of the kind that makes us call them parts of one biography, in the same sort of way in which successive notes may be part of one tune?" I confess Plato's refutation of the theory that the soul is a kind of harmony seems to me just as valid to-day as when it was first written.[1] The atomistic type of psychology favoured by the Behaviourists seems to me to have misled Mr Bertrand Russell. Take his treatment of consciousness, for example. It stands for a function, not an entity, and then he tries to explain it as a function of events. Now consciousness may be a function, but it is a function of a self, not a function of events. It is inaccurate to speak as Mr Russell speaks of a conscious desire. There is no such thing as a conscious desire. There are desires of which we become conscious, a very different thing. Or if Mr Bertrand Russell says, "No, it is the same thing," I should reply that, to speak of a conscious desire is the false way, to speak of a desire of which I am conscious, the true way to describe it. Again, what does Mr Bertrand Russell mean when he says "'I' seems to be only a string of events, each of which separately is more

[1] Cf. Phœdo, cc. 92-95.

certain than the whole"? We must ask once more, certain to whom? or in what does the certainty reside? Is the separate event more certain of itself than it is of the whole? Personally, I do not believe any separate event is certain or aware of anything at all. As Mr Bertrand Russell finely says: "We cannot suppose that a solitary electron or proton can 'think': we might as well expect a solitary individual to play a football match."[1] Then is the string more certain of each separate event than it is of itself? Personally, I do not believe this can be true. For myself, I can only say I never have an immediate certainty that thinking occurs. My immediate certainty is always that thinking occurs to me. I think Descartes was perfectly justified, and the attempt to develop a psychology without a self for which Hume, probably unjustly, is supposed to stand sponsor, was, and continues to be, fantastically ridiculous. Perhaps Mr Bertrand Russell supposes the peculiar causal laws to be more certain of the separate events than of the connection which those laws establish between the events. But no causal laws can be hypostatized in this way. No causal laws, however peculiar, are certain of anything whatever. The only possible centre of certainty is ourselves, and no separate event of which our selves are certain can possibly be more certain than the selves which are certain of it. Once more, I should have thought there were very good reasons why a thinker should not be regarded

[1] *What I Believe*, p. 12.

simply as a certain series of thoughts connected with each other by causal laws. Do the causal laws make the connections, or simply describe the way in which the connections make themselves or one thought connects itself with another ? If the former, then all the old idea of cause as compulsion which Mr Bertrand Russell so carefully excludes has come back again. If the latter, do connections make themselves, or do individual thoughts connect themselves with one another : or if both these propositions are in some measure true, do they explain the whole process of thought ? Is there no difference between ordered thought and desultory musing ? Is the *Outline of Philosophy* simply a series of thoughts, connected with each other by laws of mnemic causation ? Did the thoughts in such a book just happen to form a series, and did Mr Russell make no effort and use no judgment ? Are logical principles and standards of literary taste just peculiar causal laws by which series of thoughts are connected ? It is a curious fact that though Mr Russell frankly recognizes in connection with Köhler's apes the action of the mind as a unit, he fights shy of following it up. Thus, in explaining, along Behaviourist lines, the way in which children learn to speak, he claims that they learn single words in the same way as Professor Watson's rats learned to find their way out of mazes (p. 54). But on the previous page he casually observes that children learn words by imitation. Now imitation is another type of mental activity than the learned

reactions of rats in a maze. Yet Mr Russell never thinks it necessary to explore the nature of imitation. Again on p. 213 he refers to attention which, as he says, "enables us to take the first steps in abstraction." But he says: "I do not wish just now to discuss the nature of attention." Unfortunately he never returns to the subject. Nor, so far as I have observed, does he deal with it in his *Analysis of Mind*. Yet how is it possible to get an adequate psychology without analysing this selective activity of the mind? Having carefully refrained from examining all those sides of our conscious experience in which the mind is obviously active, and active not as a loose unity built up out of separate events, but as a unity which co-ordinates and controls events, Mr Russell finds it easy to get rid of the self in any effective sense.

His whole psychology is open to a criticism that was once passed on the psychology of William James. It is said of William James that he pushed physiological explanations as far as ever they would go, and only admitted the psychical or the spiritual when physiological explanations failed. A critic who accepted this description of James' work said that James having once admitted the psychical as independent, ought to have gone over the whole ground again to see if the explanations that had previously satisfied him really were valid. In the same way, Mr Bertrand Russell pushes atomistic Behaviourist psychology as far as it will go. When it fails, he resorts to the *Gestalt-*

psychologie, which presupposes at least some principle of organization continuously at work in our mental life. Having admitted *Gestalt-psychologie* at some point, Mr Bertrand Russell ought not to trust Behaviourist explanations of simpler psychical phenomena. The method of going as far as possible with Behaviourism is fundamentally vicious.

The self is more of a unity and more enduring than Mr Bertrand Russell is prepared to admit. Incidentally, the case for immortality is in consequence stronger than he realizes. And his own philosophy cries out for a more rational concept of the unity of the self. "The mood in which, as it seems to me, the modern man should face the universe is one of quiet self-respect." But what, on Mr Russell's psychology, is self-respect? Is it a feeling which "a series of events linked together by peculiar causal laws" entertains for "a series of events linked together by peculiar causal laws"? Is it a feeling which a self that is quite uncertain of its self entertains for the self of which it is quite uncertain? or is self-respect a separate event which, when it occurs, is quite sure of itself? I give it up. I only see quite clearly that on Mr Russell's theories, the modern man has no self to respect.

CHAPTER VIII

The Present Phase of Mr Bertrand Russell's Philosophy

I HESITATE to enlarge the scope of this book and to offer reflections on Mr Bertrand Russell's present position in philosophy, for two main reasons. In the first place, I have not read all Mr Russell's more severe and technical works of this kind, and in consequence I am not fully acquainted with the steps by which he has reached his present positions. I have, however, read the *Outline of Philosophy* with some care, and as this *Outline* is intended by Mr Russell for the benefit of those who are interested in his views on ultimate questions, but who have not followed closely his previous philosophical researches, it is perhaps legitimate to attempt on the basis of the *Outline*, an estimate of his philosophy at its present stage. In the second place, Mr Russell's philosophy develops and changes with somewhat disconcerting rapidity. The reviewer of *The Analysis of Matter* in the *New Statesman*, already quoted in an earlier chapter, likened the impression left by Mr Russell's book to the well-known Parliamentary candidate's address, which ran: "These are my sentiments, gentlemen. If you don't like them, I can change them." This is no real disparage-

ment of Mr Bertrand Russell. He belongs to the school of old John Smith the Se-Baptist who, when his critics complained of his frequent changes of doctrine, replied magnificently: "I profess I have changed and am ready still to change for the better." This might be Mr Russell's motto. He believes that philosophy ought to be more tentative and provisional than it has usually been. He readily admits his changes. But just as the friends of John Smith found it difficult to follow him, so the friends and admirers of Mr Bertrand Russell, among whom I would fain still be numbered, find it difficult to keep up his pace, and yet more difficult to anticipate the next development of his amazingly agile mind. But it seems worth while to comment on the stage he has reached in his *Outline of Philosophy*, although he may have advanced beyond it before these comments appear in print.

From the standpoint which I occupy, the *Outline of Philosophy* marks small but welcome advances in certain directions. I notice in the first place that Mr Bertrand Russell is beginning to see the folly of the rationalist habit of discarding, wholesale, beliefs which contain some admixture of error. "When we have found an error in something of which we were previously certain, we do not as a rule abandon entirely the belief which misled us, but we seek, if we can, to modify it so that it shall no longer be demonstrably false." [1] It is not clear to me that Mr Bertrand

[1] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 174.

Russell does as a rule follow this wise procedure, but I am glad that he recognizes the wisdom of it. Later on he says: "The view that all our beliefs are irrational is perhaps somewhat overdone nowadays, though it is far more nearly true than the views it has displaced."[1] The writings of Mr Bertrand Russell amply justify the first half of this sentence, and it is a sign of grace that he is prepared to make even this tentative admission. I think he is changing for the better.

Then again, in ethics, a subject which Mr Bertrand Russell continues to regard as outside the scope of philosophy for reasons which unfortunately he withholds, he seems to be a little more conscious than he was of the need and possibility of finding an objective standard. *What I Believe* assumes that there are no objective standards in ethics. In this realm everything is a matter of taste. Now at least Mr Russell wants "to find something more objective and systematic and constant than a personal emotion."[2] If he will add that we need to find something more objective than personal taste or social convention, he will make a further advance. In passing, I should say that personally I was very disappointed that Mr Bertrand Russell omitted to give the proof that ethics ought not to be included in the domain of philosophy. I should have found the discussion of that issue at least as interesting as the résumé of his views on ethics. If philosophy is to give an account of the universe, including

[1] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 202. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 234.

man, it obviously cannot omit ethics. But even if, quite illegitimately, we confine philosophy to the study of the external world and man's relation to it, I fail to see how we can exclude the subject of ethics. I trust this gap in the *Outline* will be filled up in the next edition.

More important, perhaps, is the fact that Mr Bertrand Russell now begins to find the world less antagonistic than before. In *The Free Man's Worship* he was defying power, and he has often leaned to the attitude of W. E. Henley's *Invictus*. Now, at any rate, "The world presented for our belief by a philosophy based upon modern science is, in many ways, less alien to ourselves than the world of matter as conceived in former centuries." [1] It remains true that "the universe as known to science is not in itself either friendly or hostile to man, but it can be made to act as a friend if approached with patient knowledge." [2] Nevertheless, at the very close we continue to be in a world of darkness. But I think I detect a real step forward on the part of Mr Bertrand Russell. The world is less alien than we used to suppose. Is it a far cry to the simple discovery that the earth is the home of God's children ?

But the Theist will particularly welcome the account which Mr Bertrand Russell gives of the changed outlook in philosophy on pp. 307 and 308. I quote some sentences from it :

"While knowledge of what is has become less than it was formerly supposed to be, our know-

[1] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 311. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 312.

ledge of what may be is enormously increased. Instead of being shut in within narrow walls, of which every nook and cranny could be explored, we find ourselves in an open world of free possibilities, where much remains unknown because there is so much to know. The attempt to prescribe to the universe by means of *a priori* principles has broken down: logic, instead of being, as formerly, a bar to possibilities, has become the great liberator of the imagination, presenting innumerable alternatives which are closed to unreflective common sense and leaving to experience the task of deciding, where decision is possible, between the many worlds which logic offers for our choice." Later, he says: "We might more or less fancifully attribute even to the atom a kind of limited free will, and we ourselves are not powerless and small in the grip of vast cosmic forces." All this is splendid. It chimes in with fundamental Christian convictions. The true Christian has always believed that he was a child of grace and not of fate, that life is a romantic adventure, that the world is not a finished product. He has also always believed in the divine initiative. As I have already suggested, neither prayer nor miracle can be ruled out of the new universe with its endless possibilities disclosed by modern science. Some prayers may be mistaken, but prayer itself is not irrational. Most miracles may be fictitious, but miracle is not impossible. The new physics taken as physics presents no difficulties to the Theist. On the

contrary, he rejoices in these findings. For he perceives that if Mr Bertrand Russell insists that certain possibilities leading to Theism shall not be kept open and shall not be explored, this negative is due neither to science nor to philosophy but to prejudice. Mr Russell's negation of Christianity finds no support either in science or in the philosophy he himself seeks to base upon science.

While the account which Mr Bertrand Russell gives of modern physics is extraordinarily valuable and illuminating, his attempt to turn this into a philosophy is not so convincing. His fundamental thesis is that everything in the world consists of events. An event is something having a small finite duration and a small finite extension in space. "If we assume, as I propose to do, that every event has only a finite number of parts, then every event is composed of a finite number of events that have no parts. Such events I shall call 'minimal events.'" [1] The reader is then assured that the assumption is only made for convenience, and is not essential. But a little later, these minimal events which are only a convenient assumption are elevated to the rank of the First Cause. For we read on p. 293 that the view which Mr Russell is advocating is "neutral monism." "It is monism in the sense that it regards the world as composed of only one *kind* of stuff, namely events: but it is pluralism in the sense that it admits the existence of a great multiplicity

[1] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 288.

of events, *each minimal event being a logically self-subsistent entity*." Thus these minimal events are the ultimate reality. They alone are self-subsistent. Everything is built up out of them and resolvable into them. Matter and mind, the "physical and the mental," are nothing but series of events connected in accordance with different causal laws.

Personally, I am quite prepared for the physicist to tell me that all he needs to explain matter is events of the character of radiations or vibrations or what not, which happen in accord with exact mathematical formulæ. I am not prepared for the assumption that the minimum hypothesis which satisfies the physicist is the fundamental truth about the universe for the philosopher. I see no reason whatever for believing in any such thing as a self-subsistent event, minimal or otherwise. I cannot see that this is a genuinely scientific philosophy. It is true that it is built upon the findings of modern physics, but it involves ignoring the limitations of science of which Mr Russell himself is constantly reminding us. When he is writing as a scientist, this is the kind of thing that Mr Bertrand Russell says. Speaking of the waves of light or electro-magnetism which behave in a certain fashion set forth by Maxwell in certain formulæ called "Maxwell's equations," he writes: "When I say we 'know' this (the behaviour of these waves), I am saying more than is strictly correct, because all we know is what happens when the waves reach our bodies.

It is as if we could not see the sea, but could only see the people disembarking at Dover, and inferred the waves from the fact that the people looked green. It is obvious, in any case, that we can only know so much about the waves as is involved in their having such and such causes at one end and such and such effects at the other. What can be inferred in this way will be, at best, something wholly expressible in terms of mathematical strictures. We must not think of the waves as being necessarily 'in' the ether or 'in' anything else: they are to be thought of merely as progressive periodic processes, whose laws are more or less known, but *whose intrinsic character is not known and never can be*." [1]

Again, speaking of our knowledge of the atom, he says: "We cannot know what goes on when the atom is neither absorbing nor radiating energy, since then it has no effects in surrounding regions: *consequently all evidence as to atoms is as to their changes, not as to their steady states*." [2] "Suppose your knowledge of Great Britain were entirely confined to observing the people and goods that enter and leave the ports: you could, in that case, invent many theories as to the interior of Great Britain, all of which would agree with all known facts. This is an exact analogy." [2]

Again, if you consider our perception of a table, "There is nothing in the actual experience to show whether there is a persistent entity or

[1] *Outline of Philosophy*, pp. 113, 114. [Italics mine.]
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

not."[1] "*It can be no part of legitimate science to assert or deny the persistent entity: if it does either, it goes beyond the warrant of experience. Physics tell us nothing as to the intrinsic character of matter.*"[2] Thus, the category of substance passes out of physics, because for the purposes of physics we do not need it, and because by the methods of physics we can never lay hold of the reality, which corresponds to the category of substance, if such reality exists. The whole effect of modern physics is to give us a view of the world which irresistibly reminds us of Lewis Carroll's grin without the cat. The difference between Mr Bertrand Russell as physicist and Mr Bertrand Russell as philosopher is just this. As a physicist he assures us that we know nothing about the cat. As a philosopher he assures us that there is no cat. It died a long time ago, and the grin remains as the ultimate reality, the logically self-subsistent entity.

I dispute the claim of Mr Bertrand Russell's philosophy to be genuinely scientific, because its method is simply to take the findings of physics as ultimate, and to ignore their limitations. I should also dispute the claim on the ground that it does not include all that we mean by modern science. Mr Bertrand Russell practically confines his scientific foundation to two sciences, mathematical physics and psychology. He ploughs with two animals, the ox and the ass. The ox is physics. The ass is psychology. They are un-

[1] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 125. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

equally yoked, and the ox is the predominant partner. Throughout Mr Bertrand Russell makes the assumption that the reduction of biology to physics is so probable that biology may practically be ignored. For myself, I believe that to be a grave error, and I do not see how a philosophy that ignores biology can be representative of modern science.[1]

There is another reason for questioning the general validity of Mr Bertrand Russell's conception of philosophy. He writes: "If our scientific knowledge were full and complete we should understand ourselves and the world and our relation to the world."[2] What does Mr Bertrand Russell mean by "scientific" knowledge? Is he distinguishing scientific knowledge from the Behaviourist conception of knowledge as consisting of certain reactions to the stimuli of examination questions—a form of knowledge which obviously may include "knowing a number of things that ain't so," as Josh Billings used to remark? What

[1] I have no independent judgment on an issue like this, but I note that many distinguished biologists deny Mr Russell's position. By way of example I add a paragraph from J. S. Haldane, *Mechanism, Life and Personality*, p. 81:

"What we have found is that the conception of the living organism is in common and ordinary use, and differs radically from any physical conception. We have also seen that there is no philosophical reason for rejecting this conception. There is no *a priori* reason why we should not, if it helps us, take it as the fundamental conception for biology, just as the physicist takes the conceptions of matter and energy as fundamental for physics."

I am aware, of course, that he is referring to concepts of matter that are abandoned by Mr Russell, but the modern concepts of physics appear to be almost as inadequate for the purposes of biology.

[2] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 19.

does the term "scientific" add to "knowledge" in this sentence? If all it means is ordered tested knowledge, well and good. The adjective is then correct, but perhaps superfluous. If, however, it means just the particular sciences which Mr Bertrand Russell later enumerates—physics (presumed to include chemistry and biology), physiology, sociology and psychology, then unless we include economics, ethics, law, art, literature, religion and history within the scope of sociology and psychology, these sciences even when complete will never enable us to understand ourselves and the world and our relation to it. The only certainty about a philosophy founded on modern science as Mr Bertrand Russell understands the latter term, is that it will be erected on an inadequate basis. Quite naïvely and uncritically Mr Bertrand Russell accepts this reactionary neo-positivism. He has much to say about philosophic doubt, but it is philosophic doubt limited. He reverts again and again to the doubts which lead up to Solipsism;—doubts which are purely academic and hardly worth discussing. He has no doubts at all about the adequacy of the sciences in which he happens to be interested, to explain the universe. He perpetually strains at the gnat of Solipsism and gaily swallows the camel of Neo-Positivism.

He likewise attempts a division of the realm of Nature from the realm of values which is logically indefensible. He claims that in the realm of values we are free. In this world we are greater

than Nature. The philosophy of Nature is one thing; the philosophy of value quite another thing. Yet his philosophy of Nature is determined by a value-judgment. He holds physics to be the fundamental science, the most important science because it deals with the *large* facts. Here he lets size determine his judgments of value. His whole philosophy rests on what has been rightly called "astronomical intimidation." It is also inspired by another value-judgment, the specialist's preference for his own subjects. Mr Bertrand Russell's philosophy is largely a mathematical monody with the refrain "There's nothing like leather." There is no philosophy of Nature which does not imply value-judgments and which does not involve a philosophy of values. There is no philosophy of values that does not require a philosophy of Nature.

In one of Grant Allen's short stories a lady observes that mauve is the refuge of the incompetent. Women who cannot decide on red or blue, or who dare not wear such decided colours, take refuge in mauve. I think there is a suggestion of mauve about neutral monism. Mr Bertrand Russell can no longer be an out-and-out materialist, but for some reason or other he would like to retain the consequences or main features of that obsolete philosophy. "Materialism as a philosophy becomes hardly tenable in view of this evaporation of matter. But those who would formerly have been materialists can still adopt a philosophy which comes to much the same thing

in many respects."[1] In the upshot, Mr Bertrand Russell finds he cannot offer the would-be materialists quite as much as he had hoped. He moves a step further away from quasi-materialism. Events outside us are probably thought-like, at least not totally different from mental events inside us. The logical development would appear to be some form of idealism akin to Berkeley's. But Mr Bertrand Russell stops short with neutral monism. He recognizes on p. 301 how easy it would be from his own starting-point to reach a metaphysic that will be essentially that of Berkeley. The passage runs as follows:

"It would be possible without altering the detail of previous discussions except that of Chapter XXV, to give a different turn to the argument, and make matter a structure composed of mental units. I am not quite sure that this is the wrong view. It arises not unnaturally from the argument as to data contained in Chapter XXV. We saw that all data are mental events in the narrowest and strictest sense, since they are percepts. Consequently all verification of causal laws consists in the occurrence of expected percepts. Consequently any inference beyond percepts (actual or possible) is incapable of being empirically tested. We shall therefore be prudent if we regard the non-mental events of physics as mere auxiliary concepts, not assumed to have any reality, but only introduced to simplify the laws of percepts. Thus matter will be a construction

[1] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 166.

built out of percepts, and our metaphysic will be essentially that of Berkeley. If there are no non-mental events, causal laws will be very odd; for example, a hidden dictaphone may record a conversation although it did not exist at the time, since no one was perceiving it. But although this seems odd, it is not logically impossible. And it must be conceded that it enables us to interpret physics with a smaller amount of dubious inductive and analogical inference than is required if we admit non-mental events."

Then Mr Russell continues: "In spite of the logical merits of this view, I cannot bring myself to accept it, though I am not sure that my reasons for disliking it are any better than Dr Johnson's." He finds himself constitutionally incapable of believing this view, and he does in fact believe that he *ought* to feel doubtful. It is interesting to speculate on what lies behind this attitude. If we are to treat Mr Bertrand Russell as he treats Kant, we must assume that he is under the influence of some early association. He is believing implicitly in some maxim imbibed at his mother's knee. Or perhaps his nurse told him about Dr Johnson's humorous refutation of Berkeley, and this conscientious scruple is just a reminiscence of something his nurse or his mother told him in infancy. If Mr Russell's account of conscience be correct, his belief that he ought to feel doubtful is no wiser than his mother or his nurse.

Perhaps another psychological factor is at work.

The one difficulty that he notes in Berkeley's view —the difficulty of accounting for the hidden dictaphone if there are no non-mental events— does not really arise in Berkeley's system, because he could maintain the permanence of things not actually perceived by men by treating them as ideas in the mind of God. If, then, Mr Russell declares for no non-mental events, he may find himself believing in God like Berkeley or any ordinary Christian, and that would be awful. Whatever happens, a true philosopher must not become that miserable creature, a theologian. Mr Bertrand Russell declares that *all* fear is bad. But there is one fear which he cannot eradicate from his own mind. It is the fear of conversion. So he halts in neutral monism.

While these psychological factors, particularly the second, may be really operative, there is probably a third reason. Mr Russell may be feeling that he has achieved his neutral monism too easily. The difference between the mental and the non-mental is more stubborn than he likes to admit. In particular, "persons" are not so satisfactorily explained in terms of series of events causally connected, as "things" are. Again and again he tries to bridge gulfs and smooth out difficulties by illegitimate simplifications and identifications. Two or three examples may suffice to show how easily Mr Russell convinces himself of some of his positions. In his preliminary survey, Mr Bertrand Russell asserts that "a thought and a perception are not so very

different in their own nature."[1] The thesis does not concern me at the moment, but the consideration by which it is supported interests me greatly. The argument is that since differing thoughts on the same subject can be expressed by the same words, and since differing perceptions of the same object can be expressed in the same words, a thought and a percept are thus not so very different in their own nature. Would Mr Russell argue that since two different seas may be described in the same terms, and two different mountains may likewise be described in the same terms, seas and mountains are not so very different in their own nature? The conclusion may be correct, but I cannot myself see any logical validity in such an inference.

A more glaring and astounding example of essentially the same method of argument is the way in which Mr Russell eliminates the subject-object relation from perception. He says: "There seems no longer any reason to suppose that there is any essentially relational character about what occurs in us when we perceive. The original reason for thinking so was the naïvely realistic view that we see the actual table. If what we see is as mental as our seeing, why distinguish between the two?"[2] I rubbed my eyes when I read that last sentence. Does Mr Russell think that if two things, two contiguous things as he urges later, are mental, they become indistinguishable? He might as well say that if I look at an

[1] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 12. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 221.

iron ship through an iron telescope, the telescope and the ship must be identical because both are metallic. And if the telescope should be contiguous to the ship, it might be hard to distinguish them visually, but quite impossible to identify them. A mental object in perception does not cease to be an object because it is mental. I might accept Berkeley's "Esse est percipi," but not Mr Russell's "Percipi est percipere." Obviously "percipere" and "percipi" are inseparable. Seeing and what is seen coexist in the same act of perception. But there is a distinction between active and passive, and you cannot deny the subject-object relation in perception without destroying the meaning of the word. The whole difficulty arises from Mr Russell's mistaken and perverse desire to get rid of the perceiving subject. He spends page after page trying to get his theory of perception on its legs. There is more understanding of the nature of perception in two pages of Plato's *Theætetus* than there seems to be in all the text-books of the Behaviourists.

A third example may be taken from Mr Russell's treatment of cause. He assured his secularist audience that "The philosophers and men of science have got going on cause, and it has not anything like the vitality that it used to have." [1] We must, according to the new conception, eliminate the idea of compulsion from the word cause. The relation of cause and effect now means nothing more than repeated association in

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 10.

space-time. In fact, the old and new ideas of cause are related to each other very much as beer and the prohibition drink "near-beer." Mr Wickham Steed, in one of his American articles, repeats the saying of the negro who described near-beer in the following terms: "It looks like be-ah, it smells like be-ah, it tastes like be-ah, but when it gets down inside it ain't got no authority." This new less-vital conception of cause might fittingly be called "near-cause," for it looks like cause, it acts like cause, but it ain't got no authority. Mr Russell tries to convince us that near-cause is as good as cause, and is at any rate all that science requires. Here is one of his illustrations or arguments: "To say that A is 'necessarily' followed by B is thus to say no more than that there is some general rule, exemplified in a very large number of observed instances, and falsified in none, according to which events such as A are followed by events such as B. We must not have any notion of 'compulsion,' as if the cause *forced* the effect to happen. A good test for the imagination in this respect is the reversibility of causal laws. We can just as often infer backwards as forwards. When you get a letter, you are justified in inferring that somebody wrote it, but you do not feel that your receiving it *compelled* the sender to write it. The notion of compulsion is just as little applicable to effects as to causes. To say that causes compel effects is as misleading as to say that effects compel causes." [1]

[1] *Outline of Philosophy*, p. 121.

This paragraph contains one glaring fallacy. To infer backwards from effect to cause is not to reverse a causal law. A causal law would be reversed if the effect became the cause and *vice versa*. You can only infer backwards as well as forwards, from effect to cause, as well as from cause to effect, precisely because the causal law is not reversible. This illustration does not in the least help the imagination or the reason to eliminate the idea of compulsion from cause. The whole argument is irrelevant, or at least inconclusive as between cause and near-cause. On either conception the effect does not compel the cause, and on either conception you can infer backwards as well as forwards. The only difference between the two conceptions is that with the older idea of cause you are more justified in trusting your inferences. I am not here arguing for the old idea of cause, but only urging that Mr Bertrand Russell is far too easily satisfied that he has dispensed with it.

Theories which merge thought in perception and subject in object, or which treat causal laws as reversible may attract Mr Russell because they are bizarre. But they have little else to commend them. The first two seem to be bad psychology as the last is dubious physics, and the logic by which they are commended is unworthy of a thinker who has a well-deserved reputation as a logician. The fact is that Mr Russell is so anxious to reduce things to their lowest terms that he fails to notice when he is reducing them to

absurdity. His philosophy as a whole has this character. He invites us to believe in a universe of pure Eurhythmics. "For aught we know, the atom may consist entirely of the radiations which come out of it. It is useless to argue that the radiations cannot come out of nothing." "We must not think of the waves as being necessarily 'in' the ether or 'in' anything else." So Mr Russell's conception of the universe is neither "the unearthly ballet of bloodless categories" of F. H. Bradley's nightmare, nor yet the eddying vortices of the dance of the atoms of Epicurus through infinite space; it is just a dance of nothing through nothing. I suppose Mr Russell would scoff at Tertullian's *Credo quia absurdum*, though it is difficult to see why he should. The principle often attributed to William of Occam that essences or causes are not to be multiplied beyond necessity is unquestionably of fundamental importance in philosophy, but it may be pressed too far and the redoubtable schoolman would rightly have hesitated before reducing all essences to minimal events. Mr Russell wields Occam's razor most valiantly, but I cannot help thinking that in the end, both psychologically and philosophically, he cuts his own throat with it.

CHAPTER IX

Mr Bertrand Russell and the Ethics of Sex

PERHAPS Mr Russell's deepest quarrel with Christianity is concerned with the sphere of morality. He is convinced that traditional Christian morality, at least as taught and enforced by the Churches, is the great obstacle to human progress and human happiness. "There are a great many ways in which at the present moment the Church, by its insistence on what it chooses to call morality, inflicts upon all sorts of people undeserved and unnecessary suffering. . . . It has chosen to label as morality a certain set of rules of conduct which have nothing to do with human happiness: and when you say that this or that ought to be done because it would make for human happiness, they think that has nothing to do with the matter at all. 'What has human happiness to do with morals? The object of morals is not to make people happy. It is to fit them for heaven.' It certainly seems to unfit them for this world." [1]

A reflective mind might draw from such a criticism a conclusion opposite to that which Mr Russell intends. Most men, including on occasion Mr Russell himself, are aware that the surest way

[1] *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 29.

to miss happiness is to make happiness your goal. If the Churches refuse to regard the production of immediate happiness as the test of good morals, they would seem to be actuated by something akin to wisdom. Champions of the right to be happy are usually the last people to exercise the right, and the people least capable of conferring the right on others. But behind this general charge against Church-morality as the source of unnecessary suffering lie the particular problems of marriage, divorce and sexual ethics. On these issues, Mr Russell holds that Christian morality is pedantic and oppressive and, unless I am mistaken, he includes in his criticism not only the traditional morality of the Roman Church, but also the ideals of marriage and of personal chastity which Jesus held up to His disciples.

It is not possible to close this book without some discussion of these difficult matters. As I have already said, I personally sympathize with some of Mr Russell's criticisms of what he takes to be traditional Christian morality. Thus he more than once protests against an interpretation of conjugal rights which justifies a husband in forcing intercourse on his wife.[1] Such a view has no connection with any Christian ideal, and

[1] Cf. *Why I am not a Christian*, p. 30; and *What I Believe*, pp. 55, 56.

On p. 55, Mr Russell says of the clergy: "None of them condemn the brutality of a husband who causes his wife to die of too frequent pregnancies." This is a reckless and quite inexcusable libel on the clergy. There must be hundreds of clergy who condemn such an abuse of conjugal rights as heartily as Mr Russell himself does. He cannot possibly substantiate such an assertion, and he ought to be ashamed of having made it.

in a true Christian marriage conjugal rights are never invoked. The Canon Law itself is bound to represent not the ideal, but a compromise of Christianity with masculine prejudices, masculine selfishness and deep-rooted legal tradition, Roman and Jewish. To treat such an amalgam as distinctively Christian, or as revealing the trend of Christian thought and influence at the present time, would be grossly unfair. But I suspect that many Christian people have something to learn from Mr Russell's strictures on this head. In the next place, I believe I could go some way with Mr Russell in demanding a reform of the divorce laws, though the problem does not seem to me an easy one, and the best solution is not so obvious as he imagines. Probably Christian people have been too ready to make Christ's unqualified condemnation of divorce the basis of legislation. Yet, as I shall show in a moment, if I support some of the particular reforms of the divorce laws advocated by Mr Russell, I have to dissent from the principles on which his advocacy is based. Somewhat similarly, I hold with Mr Russell that the use of contraceptives is not in itself and under all circumstances wrong, and yet I cannot help thinking that his campaign in favour of birth-control is largely mischievous. Once more, I recognize that the Christian attitude towards those who sin sexually and towards the victims of sexual vice has often been and still is more Pharisaic than Christlike, and it may be that we can learn something from the challenge of Mr Russell's

views, even though the views themselves are mistaken. But while I can thus find some points of agreement with Mr Russell, and while I prefer his candour to Rome's casuistry, yet when I compare his general emphasis and attitude in matters of sex with the attitude and emphasis of the Roman Church, I would, if I had to choose between the two, prefer the Roman Church to Mr Russell.

It is necessary to examine rather closely the new guide to happiness which Mr Russell offers to us in a sex-morality that is freed from the taint of superstition. In the chapter on marriage in his *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, Mr Russell points out that "There are two questions to be asked in regard to any marriage system: first, how it affects the development and character of the men and women concerned; secondly, what is its influence on the propagation and education of children. These two questions are entirely distinct, and a system may well be desirable from one of these two points of view when it is very undesirable from the other."[1] I find myself unable to accept this starting-point. So far from the two questions being entirely distinct, the two interests are normally inseparable, and the only marriage system that harmonizes both these high interests of mankind is a system like the law in England, "based on the expectation that the great majority of marriages will be lifelong." Normally, the joint responsibility for the pro-

[1] p. 36.

pagation and education of children is an indispensable or at least a thoroughly wholesome factor in developing the character of the men and women concerned. Normally the propagation and education of children are under the best influences when they take place in a home based on a lifelong union. It will be a sad day for England if its law ever ceases to be based upon the expectation that the great majority of marriages will be lifelong. Any extension of facilities for divorce will only be justified if in the long run they enable a greater number to enter into marriages which they honestly intend and can be reasonably expected to make lifelong.

This, I gather, is not Mr Russell's view. I am not sure whether he regards a lifelong union as the ideal for normal people to aim at. If it is an ideal, it is so remote from the actual practice of large numbers of men and women, that it is useless to base a legal system on it, and unnecessary to give it legal sanction and support. So Mr Russell devises another system which he rather euphemistically terms a marriage system. We have to recognize that the desires of individuals with regard to sex vary intensely. Some women desire to be wives without being mothers, and some men desire to be husbands without being fathers. We shall promote the happiness of such and develop their characters, by instruction in the use of contraceptives. Some women desire to be mothers without being wives, and for their benefit we must sanction extra-marital sexual relations

and set up the State endowment of motherhood. Others again, both men and women, desire to enjoy the pure sex-experience without the inconvenience of being either husbands or fathers, wives or mothers. For them we must sanction extra-marital sexual relations and the use of contraceptives. Then, as lifelong unions normally involve tension and strain which impede the development and character of the men and women concerned, we ought to encourage temporary unions of all degrees of stability and instability, experimental marriages, companionate marriages and the like. Finally, lest any one be made to feel uncomfortable, let us cease to regard adultery as sin, and make divorce cheap and easy. All these suggestions involve the scrapping of traditional morality, but " moral rules ought not to be such as to make instinctive happiness impossible." Having thus eliminated every case of individual hardship and ensured the character and development of men and women, Mr Russell would safeguard the nurture of children primarily by the endowment of motherhood, and in the last resort by casting the responsibility on the State whenever the parents or parent find it inconvenient to fulfil these responsibilities themselves or herself.

When he advocated such changes in *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, I do not think that Mr Russell wished to undermine the institution of monogamy ; he thought the position of monogamy to be so secure that we could withdraw its legal supports and legislate to ease the position of those

who find it difficult to be loyal to the ideal of monogamy, or who find the ideal for economic and other reasons temporarily or permanently beyond their reach. I must confess that I am now no longer sure that Mr Russell believes in monogamy as a norm at all. I understand that in China, he is associated in the minds of his admirers with the propaganda of free-love, and that his marriage since his return to England will seem to them to be a denial of his own principles. Certainly, the ideal of monogamy finds little or no recognition in *What I Believe*. Here is the instruction about the facts of sex which Mr Russell thinks will afford adequate guidance to modern youth. "The main physiological facts ought to be taught, quite simply and naturally, before puberty, at a time when they are not exciting. At puberty, the elements of an unsuperstitious sexual morality ought to be taught. Boys and girls should be taught that nothing can justify sexual intercourse unless there is mutual inclination. This is contrary to the teaching of the Church, which holds that, provided the parties are married and the man desires another child, sexual intercourse is justified however great may be the reluctance of the wife. Boys and girls should be taught respect for each other's liberty; they should be made to feel that nothing gives one human being rights over another, and that jealousy and possessiveness kill love. They should be taught that to bring another human being into the world is a very serious matter, only

to be undertaken when the child will have a reasonable prospect of health, good surroundings and parental care. But they should also be taught methods of birth-control, so as to insure that children shall only come when they are wanted. Finally, they should be taught the dangers of venereal disease, and the methods of prevention and cure. The increase of human happiness to be expected from sex-education on these lines is immeasurable." [1]

Mr Russell's advice to young people amounts to this, avoid rape and prostitution, and do not have children too soon, and then follow your instincts and inclinations. It seems rather inadequate, and its omissions are more remarkable than its contents. Mr Russell thinks they should be taught methods of birth-control so as to insure that children shall only come when they are wanted. He does not think it necessary to warn young folk that the free use of contraceptives may mean that children will not come when they are wanted. Boys and girls should be taught respect for each other's liberty, but they need not be reminded of the importance of striving for self-mastery and self-control. They are to be taught that "nothing gives one human being rights over another, and that jealousy and possessiveness kill love," but apparently boys need not be taught that if a woman gives herself to a man she has claims upon an honourable man which go deeper than legal rights, and that if he lets her down he inflicts on

[1] *What I Believe*, pp. 56, 57.

her a deeper wrong than any wrong in law.[1] Similarly, girls need not be taught that if a man gives a woman his full devotion, it is dishonourable for her to betray his trust. No doubt there is something wholesome in the reminder that jealousy and possessiveness kill love. We have all met the jealous wife, or husband, or lover in comedy and tragedy, if not in real life. But apparently Mr Russell does not realize that jealousy and possessiveness are the distortion of something fundamental and fundamentally good in sex-relations. It is only necessary to transfer this teaching about jealousy and possessiveness to some familiar situations in literature and history, to realize its serious limitations. Æneas is not an impressive hero, and he cuts a poor figure when he meets Dido in the underworld, but if instead of stammering out his miserable pious excuses for his desertion of her, Æneas had reminded Dido of the folly of jealousy and possessiveness, the poem would have come to an abrupt end, for Virgil would surely have been obliged to leave so contemptible a hero in hell. I suppose if Mr Russell had been confronted with the woman taken in adultery, his idea would have been to go round to the innocent party or parties and offer a little homily on the importance of eliminating jealousy and possessiveness. It seems rather inadequate and a trifle irrelevant. Somehow the significance of some difficult moral situations seems to elude Mr

[1] This is not a matter of convention. A wife's nature is such that faithlessness in one she loves is felt as an ultimate wrong, no matter what theory of marriage is held.

Russell's comprehension. Boys and girls who accept his advice will be led into distressing and disastrous moral difficulties through which Mr Russell will give them no guidance, or worse than no guidance.

Once more, boys and girls are to be taught that nothing can justify sexual intercourse unless there is mutual inclination; they need not be taught that "one of the most vital things is to have singleness of heart." Mr Russell may be assuming monogamy as an ideal, but this is not apparent either from the passage itself or from its context, since both immediately before and immediately after Mr Russell is defending sexual relations between unmarried people, and excusing unfaithfulness in married people. It is not necessary, and perhaps not desirable from Mr Russell's standpoint, to direct the attention of boys to such an important truth as is contained in the following paragraph from Mr Julian Huxley's *Religion without Revelation.* "To love one woman fully is to wish not to love any other woman fully. If a philosopher existed who was both purely rational and had also never fallen in love, this would doubtless seem to him very absurd—how could one limited human female, when so many and such diverse types existed, satisfy the mind's craving for variety? The answer is that it is so; but also that as a matter of fact this complete giving of the self in one way to one person makes it possible—so is the mind constructed—to give and to receive more freely, but in a different way,

to and from other beings; whereas the attempt to love many completely is impossible in practice, and with no single one does the love attain fullness."[1] As Mr Russell does not give them the guidance of such an ideal as this, boys and girls are thrown back on the guidance of mutual inclination. What degree of mutual inclination is required to justify sexual intercourse? Mr Russell does not say. He may mean only such degree of mutual inclination as might be expected to lead to lifelong union, but so far as his explicit teaching goes, sexual intercourse might be as casual as a partnership in dancing or at tennis. It is easy to see the manifold embarrassment that will be brought into the social relations of men and women if such teaching is widely adopted and acted on. It is easy to see how it will debase the emotional currency, and reduce sexual intercourse from the expression of the deepest love and loyalty to the expression of the merest passing whim or fancy. It is easy to see the shallowness and frivolity, the selfishness and heartlessness that will follow in its wake. It is easy to see that boys and girls following Mr Russell's guidance, after a series of temporary or casual unions, will wake up to discover that they have smirched and perhaps shipwrecked for ever what should have been their deepest happiness. I do not say that Mr Russell intends or desires such results. I am sure he does not, but what he says of Christian moralists in another connection is true of himself in this.

[1] *Religion without Revelation*, p. 307.

"These are not the objects desired by the moralist, and he is too unscientific to notice that they are the objects which he actually achieves." [1]

Mr Russell expects from his inadequate sex-education an immeasurable increase of human happiness. I, too, think the increase will be difficult to measure, but I doubt whether the problem of measuring it will actually arise. The expectation is grounded on ideas of human nature and of happiness that seem to me to be definitely false. To begin with, this ethic of sex is bound up with Mr Russell's atomistic sensational psychology. If we are nothing but a series of events, each individual event being more certain than the series, then the obvious deduction is to increase to the maximum the happiness associated with each particular event. "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," is the natural implication of this psychology. Mr Russell does indeed plead for prudence, and urge people to seek lasting rather than transient pleasures; but he can find no rational justification for his plea either in his psychology or in his ultimate philosophy. There is no permanent underlying self to be considered, and the satisfaction of the greatest number of desires is our only ethical criterion. Now in this way Mr Russell may secure for us more happy moments, more pleasurable events, but he and we may find that the series of pleasurable events is held together by a very wretched bit of string. If we are essentially not a series of events, but a develop-

[1] *What I Believe*, p. 74.

ing personality, with a principle of organization involving a morality that may not be trifled with, we shall discover that the gratification of our immediate desires has been bought at the cost of our true happiness. And so far as my observation goes, this is what is actually happening. Young people try this particular pathway to freedom and find it the road to moral degradation. They have painfully to retrace their steps in order to recover their self-respect.

Another misconception which underlies Mr Russell's views on sex is the supposition that the repression of sex which is responsible for neuroses is the same thing as the practice of continence. This seems to be implied in such a sentence as this: "Everybody who has taken the trouble to study morbid psychology knows that prolonged virginity is, as a rule, extraordinarily harmful to women, so harmful that, in a sane society, it would be severely discouraged in teachers."[1] I doubt if anyone would assert this, unless he confused prolonged virginity with the repression of sex as understood by the new psychology. No doubt the struggle to maintain one's chastity is often closely associated with and even responsible for a morbid repression of sex. But it is a popular untruth which identifies them and refuses to believe that continence is possible without setting up neuroses. On the other hand, the kind of freedom advocated by Mr Russell does such violence to the true self that it gives

[1] *What I Believe*, p. 54.

plenty of work to psycho-analysts and morbid psychologists.

Furthermore, the whole idea that all instinctive happiness is good, is false. A morality is not necessarily superstitious or irrational because it discourages some forms of instinctive happiness. Mr Russell proposes to give the reins to the strongest of our passions, with no clearly defined restrictions except the avoidance of rape and prostitution. And yet he is well aware that unless men can master their passions, the future of civilization is insecure. This danger will only pass "when men have acquired the same domination over their own passions that they already have over the physical forces of the external world." [1] The best way to secure this domination of men's passions is to let go all the legal and moral safeguards by which men have endeavoured in the past to assist their progress towards self-mastery. It is hardly probable that all these endeavours have been utterly mistaken, but Mr Russell is quite convinced that wisdom in this matter has just been born with him. The new way to self-mastery is to let one's self rip. But he still feels something more is needed. "*Science can, if it chooses*, enable our grandchildren to live the good life by giving them knowledge, self-control, and characters productive of harmony rather than strife." [1] In adopting such a position, Mr Russell is little better than a priest of Baal

[1] *What I Believe*, p. 95.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 95. [Italics mine.]

leaping vainly round his altar. Science is an instrument, not an agent. It has neither will nor power, and can solve no moral problem for us, though its progress brings to light fresh resources and fresh responsibilities. It is only our own ideals and our faith in them which can enable ourselves or our grandchildren to live the good life. When he wrote his *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, Mr Russell had not succumbed to this pathetic superstitious faith in science. Then he saw that in loyalty to our ideals lies our only hope of salvation, and that surrender to mere instinct is a betrayal of humanity. Then he saw that to meet the difficulties of the modern situation in regard to sex and marriage we need a religion. "I doubt if there is any radical cure except in *some form of religion, so firmly and sincerely believed as to dominate even the life of instinct*. . . . As religion dominated the old form of marriage, so religion must dominate the new. But it must be a new religion based upon liberty, justice and love, not upon authority and law and hell-fire." [1] Sufficient proof that there is something wrong with Mr Russell's views of sex may be found in the fact that he seems to have steadily receded from this insight. There is no hope for a better marriage-system, save as men firmly and sincerely believe in a religion based on liberty, justice and love. But there is no necessity to look round for a new religion. All we have to do is to disentangle in Christianity the religion of

[1] *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, p. 191. [Italics mine.]

the Spirit from the religion of authority. In so doing we must avoid the error of destroying liberty, justice and love by dissociating them from law and the spirit of discipline. We shall find our religion, if we accept the yoke of Jesus Christ. When he wrote the *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, Mr Russell knew that he needed such a religion. I think he still needs it, and needs it more than ever.

CHAPTER X

A Last Word on Mr Bertrand Russell and Christianity

When all is said, there is something for Mr Russell to learn from Christianity, perhaps from the Christianity of the Churches and certainly from the Christianity of Christ. We may take as an example his treatment of the subject of adultery. Here he envisages only two alternatives. Either we execrate the guilty parties with Pharisaic self-righteousness and impose legal penalties and social infamy on him and her, or else we must regard adultery as something natural and right, the objections to it springing from the ungenerous and selfish jealousy of the innocent partner. As it happens, Jesus adopted neither of these attitudes when He came face to face with an adulteress, and in His words to her, " Neither do I condemn thee ; go and sin no more," many non-Christians as well as Christians will find a more profound wisdom and a purer goodness than are apparent in anything that Mr Russell has yet written on this theme. Jesus may not be, in Mr Russell's judgment, the best and wisest of men, but Mr Russell would certainly be wiser and better if he could learn the secret of Jesus as disclosed in this incident.

This, however, is a difficult lesson for any of

us to learn. We do not find it easy to refrain from condemning the sinner without dropping into Mr Russell's laxity, and we do not find it easy to condemn the sin without resorting to Pharisaic severity. But if Mr Russell remains blind to the significance of Christ's attitude towards adultery, and cannot follow Christ there, he might be willing to turn his attention to a saying which he himself quotes with approval. "Judge not that ye be not judged," was not aimed especially at magistrates, as Mr Russell supposes. Indeed it may not refer to magistrates at all, since it is possible, though difficult, for a Christian to be a magistrate. St Paul translated the precept of Jesus for magistrate when he wrote: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, remembering yourselves lest ye also be tempted." Christians like Frank Crossley of Manchester, or Joshua Rowntree of Scarborough, have succeeded in exhibiting this temper on the magistrates' bench. No, the saying, "Judge not that ye be not judged," has a wider application. It applies to Mr Russell and myself. It suggests that we should judge ourselves with severity and others with charity. This, too, is not easy to live up to. Look at Mr Russell's tract and look at this book of mine. But if instead of raking over the ashes of extinct controversies, instead of deriding the fallacies of Theists and denouncing the crimes of the Churches Mr Russell would turn his searchlight on himself,

if he would remove the motes that pervert his own intellectual and moral vision, he might see more clearly to remove the beams from the eyes of us poor devils of Theists. And he might do so much. He is right or nearly right on some great issues. I cannot forget the stand that he took during the War for justice and peace. Even though his war-time pamphlets contained some bitter expressions and misjudgments, as was perhaps inevitable in war-time, yet he maintained a splendid independence of thought and defended his convictions with a courage and self-sacrifice that might have won admiration even from those who loathed his attitude. For myself, as a Quaker, I cannot but be grateful to one who helped fight our battle and more or less shared our testimony. How much he has done! And how much more he might do—I won't say, if only he were a Christian! but if only he would try to understand Christianity!

For the time is past for these renewals of more or less meaningless conflicts between science and Christianity. The two great factors on which the maintenance and progress of our civilization depend are the Christian faith and modern science. If these two quarrel in the world of to-day, our hope sinks low, and any man, however able, who perpetuates this senseless quarrel is dragging us down. To-day we need men of science who respect religion, and religious men who appreciate science. Will not Mr Bertrand Russell be persuaded to think again and take his stand at least among the former ?

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